# Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars

## SPECIAL ISSUE: ASIAN WOMEN

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**Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars**

Statement of Purpose

We first came together in opposition to the brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam and to the complicity or silence of our profession with regard to that policy. Those in the field of Asian studies bear responsibility for the consequences of their research and the political posture of their profession. We are concerned about the present unwillingness of specialists to speak out against the implications of an Asian policy committed to ensuring American domination of much of Asia. We reject the legitimacy of this aim, and attempt to change this policy. We recognize that the present structure of the profession has often perverted scholarship and alienated many people in the field.

The CCAS seeks to develop a humane and knowledgeable understanding of Asian societies and their efforts to maintain cultural integrity and to confront such problems as poverty, oppression, and imperialism. We realize that to be students of other peoples, we must first understand our relations to them.

The CCAS wishes to create alternatives to the prevailing trends in scholarship on Asia which too often spring from a parochial cultural perspective and serve selfish interests and expansionism. Our organization is designed to function as a catalyst, a communications network for both Asian and Western scholars, a provider of central resources for local chapters, and a community for the development of anti-imperialist research.

[*passed March 28-30, 1969, Boston*]

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Correction:

In "Aliens, Ambassadors, and Academic Freedom," by Usha Mahajani, in the December Bulletin (Vol. 6, no. 4), two mistakes escaped our proofreaders.

p. 46, Column 1, Paragraph 2, line 4 from below, should read: "psychiatric profiles of persons to damage their reputation; imprisonment and prosecution of radicals on bizarre, trumped up charges." (not, as in the text, "psychiatric profiles of radicals on bizarre, trumped up charges")

p. 47, Column 2, para. 2, under heading "Un-Americanism and Anti-Americanism," line 3 from below, should read: "through the Philippine-American war of 1899-1902 and the Korean War of 1950-53 to the Indochina War which is still going on." (not: "through the Philippine-American War which is still going on")

Our apologies to the author.—the editor.

**Cover: Women Pulling Cart with Papers. Photo: Hari Sharma**

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# Introduction

by Phyllis Andors

Last year a group of women in Asian studies met to discuss the role of women in the process of social change from the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions to the crisis-ridden Indian subcontinent. Many were currently active in the American women's movement and shared the conviction that women, though powerless politically throughout much of history, through the work they do and the conditions under which it is performed, have a tremendous influence on the development of every society. It was obvious to all that there was not only a lack of information and analysis, but that even the work that had been done focused on the "woman question" in misleading or inadequate ways. The implications –social, political, economic and psychological–of the condition of women within patriarchal and class society have only recently begun to be seriously discussed in the West. Yet in Asian studies there has been no attempt to probe the relationship between feminism and social change and revolution in a coherent and systematic way. This Special Issue of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* on Asian Women, Part I of two parts, covers India and China, and other issues to follow later this year will cover Japan, Vietnam, and other parts of Southeast Asia.

The contributors to the Special Issue are all students of Asian society or women of Asian national origin. The methodology and particular concerns are unique to each author, but all share a common focus on the role that women play in the initiation of social change and the implications for such change on the role of women. The essays explore relatively new ground and should be viewed as the occasion for further study and questioning rather than as definitive explanations.

Focusing our attention on China and India, the two giants of Asia, enables us to examine two alternatives in the relationship of women's emancipation, social reform and/or social revolution. The study of Chinese and Indian women raises crucial quesions. What are the social roots of feminist movements? What role do women play in national revolution? Does the ideology of a revolutionary party influence the way in which or the extent to which women participate in social revolution? Do women have special interests that conflict with men within their own class? How do women achieve the consciousness necessary to demand equal participation and, ultimately, equality? We could go on, but it is evident that these kinds of questions illuminate the need not only for concrete analysis but for further theoretical development as well. We hope this Special Issue begins to explore at least some of these issues and problems.

We begin the issue with an interpretation by Vera Schwarcz of an essay by Lu Hsün analyzing the social structure of early 20th century China and the role women played within it. Acknowledging the necessity of economic independence for women as vital to liberation, he raises the crucial question of whether social revolution should have priority over the purely feminist concerns of legislating equality.

Jan and Steve MacKinnon's interpretation of the particular oppressions Agnes Smedley suffered as a woman in pioneer American society enables us to understand the importance Smedley attributed to women's liberation within the general context of social revolution. Her ability to communicate the conflicts and difficulties faced by Chinese women in war and revolution is evidenced by the short story we have included.

Jane Price's essay shows the clear differences in strategy regarding women when the Chinese revolution moved to the countryside. Focusing on the leadership positions within revolutionary educational institutions, she suggests that the recruitment of women was a low priority given the military needs of the pre-1949 period.

The two essays by Norma Diamond and Phyllis Andors illustrate the contradictions which can arise in the process of social change. Diamond's essay shows how tenacious and *rational,* given conditions of poverty and technological backwardness, traditional attitudes towards female roles can be. Andors' examination of the process of social change during the Great Leap Forward brings to light real contradictions that exist at any given point in time between the creation of new social institutions and the persistence of old role definitions.

When we turn to India, the struggle for women's emancipation takes on a qualitatively different aspect primarily due to the lack of a supportive social context. The first essay by Gail Omvedt is an attempt to re-evaluate the role of women in social change in India. This essay focuses on women not at elite levels but over the long term in the much more significant villages of India. Using Maharashtra as a case study, Omvedt shows that contrary to the generally passive role of upper-class women, women of the lower classes, who have always had to work out of economic necessity, play and have played an important participatory role in social movements. The interviews by Mody and Mhatre, which deal with female urban slum dwellers, are supportive of this hypothesis. They clearly illustrate a high level of political consciousness by these exploited and oppressed women.

Maria Mies gives an analysis of the first attempts by Indian peasant women to organize themselves and demand social change. That women, the most acutely oppressed victims of India's economic crisis, have become a vanguard group whose demands interestingly go beyond feminist goals is a significant development in social revolution. The revolutionary songs which follow this essay are the main propaganda tool of the movement and illustrate, quite poignantly, the plight of these women.

If Omvedt, Mody, Mhatre and Mies focus on the role of women at the grassroots level, the mini-biography of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya by Betsey Cobb focuses on the role of a leading member of the intellectual establishment.

We hope these essays raise important issues and are a beginning step to a fuller understanding of the process of social change as it concerns women. Thanks for assistance in editing go to Jane Price, Kathleen Gough, Marilyn Young, Christine White, Steve Andors, and Jon Livingston.

# Ibsen's Nora: The Promise and the Trap

by Vera Schwarcz

The late nineteenth century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen both guides and haunts the struggle for the emancipation of women. His play "A Doll's House" remains after nearly one hundred years a most eloquent statement of the urge to stand free. Nora, the play's heroine, has inspired countless women in their fight for liberation.

Nora embodies the individualist alternative. In her, Ibsen depicts the full glory of a woman who finally finds herself in opposition to all social norms. The play ends with the dramatic sound of a door slamming shut. Nora walks away from the security of her household and from all traditionally sacred values of marriage and motherhood. She leaves to face an uncertain but compelling future of self-becoming.

Nora has recently been rediscovered in the United States as the women's movement broadens its search for alternative role models. In the past year, professional and college theater groups have revived the play and the movie industry has introduced it to a mass audience.[1] To better understand the appeal of Ibsen today, it is useful to examine his impact in a broader historical and cross-cultural context.

In China, more than fifty years ago, Ibsen was received with similar enthusiasm. During the May Fourth Movement, which culminated in the student demonstrations of 1919, "A Doll's House" was translated in the hope of sparking interest and accelerating women's liberation. However, within a few years, the limits of this kind of liberation became apparent. Lu Hsün's 1923 essay "What Happens After Nora Leaves?", which I have translated and will quote from at some length, stresses considerations which many contemporary Chinese, and many Westerners today, choose to disregard. Mesmerized by individualism, we find it difficult to think beyond the grandiose gestures of spiritual emancipation. From this Chinese critique of the "Nora compulsion," we can begin to see how easily individualistic liberation can become a trap when it is divorced from political and economic revolution.

Ibsen's role in the Chinese Revolution was to expand the realm of the possible. His characterization of Nora augmented the "live options" available to Chinese society on the eve of the May Fourth Movement. During this period, China sought to extricate itself from the stranglehold of traditional morality. The revolt against the "Old" was well on its way when Chinese intellectuals first discovered Ibsen. Since the 1911 anti-dynastic revolution, the definition of the intolerable was becoming sharper and more widely shared. Alternatives to the moribund tradition, however, remained unclear. In this gap between the "is" and the "ought" Ibsen entered the Chinese consciousness.

Uprooted from the traditional images of self, the new intellectuals embraced Ibsen because he both mirrored their hopes and shattered existing mores. His vision of an alternative selfhood proved to be so potent a catalyst because it was already dormant in the contemporary consciousness. "The longing to resemble . . . is an incipient resemblance; the word which we shall make our own is the word whose echo we have already heard within ourselves."[2]

"Ibsenism" was just such a word appropriated by the Chinese intellectuals during the May Fourth Movement. Their main vehicle of expression was *New Youth* magazine. In its seven years of publication (1915-1922) spanning 54 issues, *New Youth* presented its readers with only two special issues: the "Ibsen" issue of June 1918, and the "Marx" issue of May 1919. These two thinkers were deemed to be especially important for the Chinese experience. While Marxism was presented as the appropriate prescription for China's political problems, Ibsenism was introduced as most pertinent to the spiritual needs of the Chinese revolution.

Hu Shih's essay "Ibsenism," which introduced the 1918 special issue, is seminal for the Chinese definition of individualism. Hu Shih presents Nora as the ultimate rebel, one who symbolizes the *why* of rebellion. Why risk the first step toward liberation? To save yourself! Hu Shih interprets "A Doll's House" as centering on the question "why dare?" He highlights the final scene of the play in which Nora rejects her husband's appeal to her "moral" calling as mother and wife in the name of her more "sacred" duty to herself.

At this time in China the movement for women's emancipation was beginning to gain widespread publicity. The struggle, however, was not of women alone. Their saga became symbolic of a wider hope for liberation. Men, too, found themselves disowned whenever they rebelled against tradition and the family. Nora's example came to encompass a general refusal to conform to Confucian morality. As her husband's puppet, Nora was likened in China to a monkey performing in an arena. Hu Shih writes that she represents the individual who "is no longer willing to keep up appearances and who has enough courage to give notice to the circus manager. She runs from the performing stage to make her own life."[3]

Nora is seen by Hu Shih as the incarnation of the will to reach self-fulfillment through liberation from oppression and self-deceit. In discussing the significance of her apparent egoism, he quotes from one of Ibsen's letters to his friend and critic, Georg Brandes. These lines were to haunt Chinese intellectuals for decades to come: "What I hope from you is a pure kind of egoism. If you should want to be of benefit to society there is no better way than to fashion yourself into a useful tool. There are times in which I feel that the whole world is like a mass of colliding ships and the most important thing is to save oneself."[4] The equivalence which Hu Shih proceeds to establish between "pure egoism" and "true altruism" was to remain for Chinese intellectuals the central meaning of "A Doll's House."

Five years after Hu Shih's call to the "new youth" to emulate Nora, Lu Hsün warned against the dangers of the

"Nora compulsion." The occasion for his warning was an address to a women's vocational school in Peking. Having witnessed the existential consequences of Hu Shih's injunction, Lu Hsün felt compelled to break the spell cast by "A Doll's House." Addressing himself specifically to women, he rudely asked: "What happens *after* Nora leaves?"

In his speech, which was subsequently circulated in essay form with this inquiring title, Lu Hsün asserts that the sound of a slamming door is an unsatisfactory answer to the dilemmas posed by women's search for emancipation. While he feels that it would be unfair to burden Ibsen's ghost with the task of clarifying contemporary questions, Lu Hsün does push his audience to confront the concrete and mundane consequences of a liberated consciousness.

To his own impolite question, Lu Hsün answers that Nora has only two possible courses of action, to become a prostitute or return home. While he does not doubt the compelling impulse to be free, Lu Hsün raises the issue of its price and aftermath. He asserts: "Nora is much like a bird which has been caged for a long time. When it first finds itself outside the cage door, it faces a threatening environment. Should its wings have atrophied and the habit of flying be forgotten, it has no future."[5]

From envisioning the dismal prospects which await a barely emancipated Nora, Lu Hsün proceeds to consider the psychological usefulness of being unaware. His praise of "dreaming" rings harshly to ears accustomed of hearing the glories of even the most impractical revolt:

> *What pains people the most is to awaken from a dream and have nowhere to go. Dreamers are happy. If there is no path you can point them onto, then it is best not to startle them into awareness. . . . To tell lies and to keep dreaming is at certain times the only thing to do. Therefore, if we fail to find an alternative, what we need to do is dream. However, it is impossible to fathom the dream of the future. The hopes of a distant utopia just make people feel more intensely their own suffering; it forces the soul to confront its own decaying corpse. . . . Therefore, if we fail to find an alternative, we need a dream. But we do not need the remote dreams of the future—what we need is a viable dream for the present.*[6]

Lu Hsün is a practical dreamer. He also recognizes that a dreamer once awakened cannot return calmly to his dream world. A question once asked cannot be unasked; the seeds of doubt once sown cannot be later eradicated. So Nora must leave. Lu Hsün accepts this inevitable awakening and turns to the question, how might Nora avoid the equally humiliating alternatives of prostitution or a compromising return home. Again, he is asking a vulgar question, one which grates on idealistic ears:

> *What is Nora taking with her aside from her awakened consciousness? She needs to take along something material, some provision in her pocketbook—to put it simply, she needs money. Dreams are nice, but money is important. Money is a word which sounds harsh and distasteful to the noble-minded. Still, I feel that morality not only alters its meaning from day to day, but it also assumes different connotations before and after eating.*[7]

Here, Lu Hsün spells out his critique of individualistic emancipation. He sees the "Nora compulsion" as a trap whenever it becomes divorced from concrete realities. A liberated consciousness by itself is a ticket to starvation or destitution. Thus Lu Hsün admonishes:

> *Nora needs money—to put it more elegantly, it is economics which matters in the end. Freedom is certainly not something that can be bought for money. But it can be lost through lack of money. Mankind has one huge handicap—that is, we often get hungry. In order to remedy this handicap and guard against becoming someone else's puppet,* economic power is most important. *While I do not know precisely how this power is to be attained, I do know that we must struggle; and that compared with the struggle for political power, this confrontation will need to be more fierce.*[8]

In a contemporary Chinese atmosphere replete with such bourgeois demands as the right to marry freely, vote and be elected to office, Lu Hsün hammers on the basic issue of the distribution of wealth. It is a credit to his political insightfulness that even during this "liberal" stage of the Chinese revolution he could foresee the limits not only of individualistic emancipation but also of purely political liberation. Both are at best hollow and untenable in the absence of an economic foundation.

In this essay Lu Hsün strives to steel his readers for the struggle ahead. He warns that if the confrontation over economic rights is to be won, it will necessitate audaciousness and tenacity:

> *There can be found in the world a most insistent spirit—its hallmark is endurance. . . . This is what is required in the search for economic power. Some people will say to you that this kind of power is too trite. Answer them that you still want that economic power. If they say to you that this kind of power is too base, then answer them that you still want that economic power. If they say that the economic system is about to change and hence there is no need for worry, keep answering that you still want that economic power.*[9]

Although Lu Hsün accepts the absolute priority of economics, he knows it to be only a partial solution to the larger problem of subjugation. He asks himself if one's economic freedom is enough insurance against the renewed prospect of puppethood. His answer is sober and sobering:

> *In contemporary society, not only do women become the puppets of men, but women among themselves and men among themselves make each other into puppets. . . . This is not a predicament that can be solved by a few women gaining economic power. . . . Economic power is an intermediate goal to be sought while thinking up more total solutions.*[10]

Revolution is the answer to enslavement. Lu Hsün predicts that it is also the means to achieve economic equality. In his conclusion he is explicit about his expectations: "China is hard to change. If there is no whip at its back, China is unwilling to move ahead. I think the whip is about to fall. Whether this is good or bad is another matter. What is certain is that a beating is needed."[11]

The alternative which Nora embodies influenced greatly the parameters and direction of the Chinese movement for women's emancipation. It is significant that men are the

dominant figures in this debate over the viability of her example. Nora, the product of a sympathetic male intuition, became a symbol for broad-minded Chinese male intellectuals.[12] One wonders how Chinese women themselves might have appropriated Nora: would they have extolled her as readily as Hu Shih or predicted her destitution as inevitably as Lu Hsün? Many of the women who left their homes to become factory workers in Shanghai in the 1920s discovered a new kind of freedom and a new kind of oppression which few of the May Fourth intellectuals saw or understood. During the May Fourth Movement, Nora became a symbol because women themselves were still relatively invisible. This interlude of intellectual debate over the "Nora compulsion" is important, however, because it broadened the issue beyond women's liberation to encompass a profound critique of individualistic emancipation.

Lu Hsün's qualms about the individualistic alternative were not unique in contemporary China. Barely two years after his own advocacy of "Ibsenism," Hu Shih began to have second thoughts of his own. He had come to realize that the quest for self-realization was deeply corrosive of the kind of determined struggle necessary for implementing social change. In response to a wave of utopianism sweeping among Chinese youth, Hu Shih redefined his stance in his famous essay of 1921, "The Non-Individualistic New Life." Here, the once-champion of individualism now rails against a generation seeking escape in the Japanese-inspired "New Village" movement.

Disenchanted with the social morass in which they found themselves and lured by the promise of individual purity, young people exhorted each other to forge "independent new selves." Hu Shih condemns this "new youth" for choosing a life which is escapist and which avoids struggle. He now rejects as untenable any separation between individual self-fulfillment and social reform. The "pure egoism" he had idealized three years before now appears to him to be mere selfishness. Still, Hu Shih values greatly the role of the individual in social change. The emphasis now is on "true individuality"—that is, the ability to think independently and to be personally responsible for one's actions. However, unlike Lu Hsün, who uses economic arguments, Hu Shih cannot demonstrate the inadequacy of individualistic emancipation. In the end, he can only plead with the young. As a liberal, Hu Shih's appeal is to conscience: "Young boys and girls with ambitions for the new life, what right do we have to run away from so many problems and escape from this world to the life of the new village? What face and conscience do we have to leave this filthy, evil old village and enter a life of peaceful blessings in the new village?"[13]

The debate over the social usefulness of individualism has remained alive among the inheritors of the May Fourth Movement. In Nationalist Taiwan, Hu Shih's thought has been a potent catalyst among dissident intellectuals. His most able and famous student, Li Ao (presently in prison), faces the problem squarely in his evaluation of Hu Shih's contribution to the new culture movement. He, too, is wary of the pure individualism inherent in the "Nora compulsion." However, Li Ao does find Hu Shih's 1921 redefinition of "individuality" useful as a description of the quality of mind needed for resistance to social authority. In Taiwan, the mode of struggle is dissent. Contemporary "new intellectuals" are thus able to find much inspiration in Hu Shih's 1921 definition of the individual as the person who

*is willing to take responsibility for the consequences of his own thoughts and beliefs, does not fear authority and is not afraid of being imprisoned or of being killed. He only thinks of the truth and does not think of private profit or loss.*[14]

In China, the dilemma of individualism has plagued many communist revolutionaries. For these inheritors of the May Fourth tradition, individualistic revolt has come to be seen as a great hindrance to revolutionary action. Chou Yang, chief of the propaganda bureau before the Cultural Revolution, summarized as follows the problem of individualism in the communist movement:

*We could not liberate ourselves from the old individualism. It may be recalled that in those days [during the May Fourth Movement] individualism was totally identified with such concepts as "liberation of personality" and "independence of character". . . . We once fervently welcomed Ibsen, took to heart his famous saying that "the strongest man on earth is he who stands most alone." Most of us embarked on the revolutionary path via the individualistic detour, and joined the revolution with an individualistic knapsack on our back.*[15]

For the contemporary women's movement Ibsen's legacy is an ambiguous one. On the one hand, he has articulated forcefully the feelings and the drama of awakening consciousness. He has become a natural soul-mate in that agonizing period which precedes every breakthrough to a new vision of self. However, Nora's exit marks merely the beginning of an arduous struggle, one whose full dimensions are only now becoming apparent. For this reason, it is important for us to hear the full measure of doubt about the "Nora compulsion" which was voiced in the Chinese setting. If we ignore this critique, we are in danger of mistaking the initial exhilaration of consciousness in revolt for the final achievement of revolutionary consciousness.

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1. See the discussion of Jane Fonda's and Claire Bloom's film renderings of Ibsen in Aljean Hormetz's article "Two Dolls Play House" in *Ms.* (January 1974), pp. 42-45.

2. Maurice Friedman, *To Deny Our Nothingness: Contemporary Images of Man*, (New York, 1967), p. 363.

3. Hu Shih, "I-pu-sheng-chu-i" (Ibsenism), *Hsin ch'ing nien* (New Youth), vol. 4, no. 6, (June 1918), p. 492.

4. Ibid., p. 503.

5. "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" in Lu Xun, *Silent China; Selected Writings of Lu Xun*, edited and translated by Gladys Yang (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 148-154.

6. Ibid., p. 146. Translations used here are mine.

7. Ibid., pp. 146-47.

8. Ibid., p. 147.

9. Ibid., p. 149.

10. Ibid., p. 150.

11. Ibid., p. 151.

12. In the novels of male authors depicting the period of the May Fourth Movement, would-be Noras predominate. See Pa Chin's

13. Hu Shih, "Fei ke-jen chu-i ti hsin sheng-huo" (The Non Individualistic New Life), *Hu Shih wen-ts'un* (Collected essays of Hu Shih), vol. 4, p. 1060.

14. Li Ao, *Hu Shih yen-chiu* (Studies of Hu Shih), (Taipei, 1964), p. 15.

15. Chou Yang, "A Great Debate on the Literary Front," translated in C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, p. 347. Also see, Ah Ying's "Ibsen's Works in China" in *Wen i pao* (1956), pp. 34-36.

# Agnes Smedley: A Working Introduction

**by Jan and Steve MacKinnon**

To many Asians and informed Asia specialists, Agnes Smedley (1892-1950) is a folk heroine. Increasingly, her remarkable life and work with Indian and Chinese revolutionary movements serves to inspire scholar-activists in the Asian field—especially women. Yet, besides what she said in her books, we know little more about her than what is in the fragmented and often contradictory caricatures and stories told by her contemporaries. In this preliminary introduction to Smedley we shall try to begin separating myths from reality.

It is impossible to separate Smedley the feminist and activist from her class and emotional background, for she herself never could, or did. Born into the rural poverty of northern Missouri of a hard-drinking, story-telling illiterate father and a much overworked mother and reared on the romantic tales of Jesse James and cowboy ballads, Smedley was stamped by the fervent individualism of the old West. When she was young her family migrated West out of rural Missouri and into the wrong side of the tracks section of many a western town. While her bedraggled mother took in laundry, Smedley saw her father go from bad to worse until his spirit was finally broken while a coal miner in Ludlow, Colorado—the Rockefeller mines. The family was dependent in its poverty on a prostitute aunt to keep them from utter destitution—a fact Smedley was paradoxically both ashamed and proud of all her life (one of her last interests before she died was a study of prostitution in England.)

The horror and degradation of marriage, and especially the trap of lower-class child bearing and rearing, were to haunt and motivate many of her future actions. We have uncovered rich local southwestern materials that document the bitterness she ate in her struggle to liberate herself through education—a dream instilled by her mother. These materials demonstrate that most of her autobiographical novel, *Daughter of Earth* (1929), is a factual poignant document of her early years. Besides spotty attendance at grammar schools, Tempe Normal School (now Arizona State University) in 1911-12 was her first significant educational experience. She became editor of the school paper and many of her stories were obviously autobiographical and remarkably well written. Some of them re-emerged eighteen years later in *Daughter of Earth*. In Tempe Smedley met her first husband Ernest Brundin and his sister, Thorburg Marie, both of whom had a profound influence on her. As she wrote in the novel, her marriage to Brundin was doomed and ended in divorce partly because of her fear of pregnancy and the emotional chaos caused by abortions. She did succeed in educating herself enough at Tempe and later at San Diego State College (then San Diego Normal School) to obtain a position teaching typing at the latter in 1914. After losing this position in 1916 because of her association with groups and individuals who had been involved in San Diego's free speech movement of 1912, and possibly because of contact with Indian nationalists, Smedley moved to New York.

Smedley's life in New York from 1917 to 1920 was a period in which she tried to sort out her personal life and to educate herself politically. Her energy was incredible. While working as a secretary, she wrote for such journals as *The Call* and Margaret Sanger's *Birth Control Review* and became deeply involved with the Indian nationalist movement. It was because of her involvement with Indian nationalists that she fell victim to the conspiracies of British and U.S. intelligence operatives (who hounded her for the rest of her life). In March 1918 Smedley and Saliendra Nath Ghose were arrested in New York and indicted under the Espionage Act for attempting to stir up rebellion against British rule and for representing themselves as diplomats (the popular interpretation of the charge was that they were part of a German plot against the British). The Federal charges against her were not dropped until 1923, but after six months in the Tombs she was released on bail. This was raised in part by Margaret Sanger since Smedley also had been charged with violating a local anti-birth control law. Out of her experience in jail came her first and now extremely rare book of stories, *Cell Mates*. Not surprisingly, prison radicalized her. Once out, she threw herself into the Indian revolutionary movement: raising money, writing articles, editing a newletter, *India News Service*, and acting as executive secretary of Friends of Freedom for India. All this while still earning her living as a reporter. Always, as in *Daughter of Earth*, the political and personal were completely intertwined. The fatherly professorial figure in the novel who first interests her in India was Lala Rajpat Rai, a major though moderate elder statesman of the Indian nationalist movement at the time. The evil Juan Diaz in the novel was quite possibly Hiramba Das Gupta, double-dealing figure in the East Indian communities of New York and Chicago.

By 1920 the Indian revolutionary movement in the U.S. had been pretty much suppressed through the combined efforts of British intelligence and the U.S. Justice Department. Probably because of this, Smedley, who was now committed to the need for armed revolutionary struggle in India, decided to move to Germany and join a group called the Indian Revolutionary Committee of Berlin.

Berlin, 1921-28, the vortex of the overseas Indian movement, was critical—both politically and personally—to Smedley's life (this period is depicted in *Daughter of Earth*, but set entirely in the U.S.). Emma Goldman described her and an Indian companion in 1921:

> *She was a striking girl, an earnest and true rebel, who seemed to have no interest in life except the cause of the oppressed people in India. Chato (her Hindu friend) was intellectual and witty, but he impressed me as a somewhat crafty individual. He called himself an anarchist, though it was evident that it was Hindu nationalism to which he devoted himself entirely.*[1]

The crafty fellow whom Goldman did not like was Virendranath Chattopadhaya, long the organizer and brains of the Berlin group. He became Smedley's commonlaw husband and it was through him that she deepened her understanding of Marxist theory. Ultimately her relationship with Chatto (as he was usually called) destroyed her political and personal life. The hostility toward Smedley felt by major Indian revolutionaries is illustrated by M. N. Roy's statement in his memoirs which represents the classic Indian sexist stereotype of the woman as temptress:

> *. . . The famous revolutionary Chattopadhaya naturally commended himself for affection. She [Smedley] came over to Berlin and was known to have lived with Chattopadhaya for several years. It seems that she managed to poison Chatto's mind against me. In any case, she was the evil genius of the Indian revolutionary group . . . But for her influence, Chatto, who was an intelligent and practical man, would have behaved differently. I learned in the course of time that she was heartily disliked by all the other members of the group because of her pretension to be a more passionate Indian patriot than the Indians themselves. . . .*[2]

To give Smedley's side, in *Daughter of Earth* and to friends in the 1940s, she bitterly described working to financially support as well as slavishly cooking and keeping house for men who sat around talking about revolution. Moreover, other Indian revolutionaries recognized her positive contributions to the cause. Jawaharlal Nehru, for example, met Smedley in Berlin in 1926 and was sufficiently impressed to invite her to India over twenty years later (just after independence). Eventually, the Berlin period ended for Smedley in a total nervous breakdown, for which writing *Daughter of Earth* was part of the therapy. Thereafter, for Smedley the political and personal remained consciously intermeshed, but never again would she join a political organization (like a communist party) nor become as emotionally dependent on a man.

There were other important sides to Smedley's life in Germany which helped to sustain her. She continued to be active in feminist causes, opening a birth control clinic in Berlin in 1922. She kept in touch with Margaret Sanger, bringing her to Germany for a lecture tour in 1927. She also taught English and American studies at the University of Berlin while winning acceptance there as a student for a doctorate in Indian history. During the entire period she wrote numerous articles in German, many for academic journals, mostly on Indian history and women. Moreover, she evidently was part of the exciting intellectual scene in Germany during the 1920s. Käthe Kollwitz was a friend and Smedley was in touch with a number of Freud's circle of disciples. In 1928-29 Germany's best newspaper, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for which figures like Brecht and Walter Benjamin wrote, serialized *Daughter of Earth* on its front page.

In *Battle Hymn of China* (1943) Agnes Smedley picks up her personal story where *Daughter of Earth* leaves off. Smedley does not separate chronicling the Chinese revolution from her own life history. She begins the book by giving her origins in the U.S., goes on to discuss her German period, and only then tells how she came to China as a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. We have found out that she obtained this job late in 1927 through Julian Gumpertz, then a member of the German Communist Party. It is interesting to note that the *Frankfurter Zeitung* started publishing a translation of *Daughter of Earth* within a few weeks of her first China reports. Smedley's psychological state upon arriving in China in 1928 was precarious. Some described her at that time as mercurial, alternating in mood from paranoid and near-suicidal to compassionate, a great humorist, mimic, actress, and poet. Smedley threw herself into the China situation with the same intense intellectual and emotional involvement that had consumed her in the Indian movement—perhaps even more so because she was seeing and could identify directly with the women and poor of China. Her newspaper articles, many of which included cameo portraits of individuals like Chang Siao-hung in the story "The Dedicated" that follows this article, were collected in her first China book, *Chinese Destinies* (1933). These stories are sensitive, powerful, and lyrical. It seems obvious that Smedley could have been a great fiction writer had she not been so determined about changing the conditions of the oppressed. Rewi Alley in *Yo Banfa!* described first meeting Smedley in Shanghai in 1930:

> *. . . She had asked to be shown some factories and we had just been around some of the shocking sweatshops which were all too common in the "model settlement" of Shanghai.*
>
> *I can still see her great eyes look at me intently over the table as I told her of some of the suffering, some of the tragedy, some of the denial of life I moved amongst in industrial Shanghai.*
>
> *With a short bitter laugh, she in her turn told me of her first vivid impression of Shanghai, how she had seen a group of workers hauling goods from a wharf on a hand cart straining under the ropes in the "tiger heat" of a Shanghai summer. How there came a tall bearded Indian policeman and beat them over their bare, sweating backs to*

*Agnes Smedley, blow-up from photo of Kalakagathia Literary Society, Tempe Normal School, 1911-12 (Arizona State University Archives).*

*clear them out of the way of a shiny black limousine in which an arrogant foreign official sat. How she felt that it was she herself who was being beaten by that policeman, the shame she felt at seeing one of the oppressed being so treated by another of the oppressed, and how she had said to herself, "This must be a place where much can be done by anyone with guts."*[3]

Alley went on to tell her of his final disillusionment about any possibility of reform under the old system. It had come when a group of men who had been organizing silk filature workers were "crudely executed at Wusih as Communist." To Alley, "it suddenly became very clear to me that the only way was basic change. Agnes leaned forward and gripped my wrist. 'Then let's get along with the changing of it,' she said firmly."[4]

Smedley accomplished much in China. Her studies of Chinese women are the most lyrical and moving pieces we have about a variety of Chinese women in the 1930s, from the urban elite to Communist guerrillas to the ordinary peasant woman. In mid-1932, along with Madame Sun Yat-sen and members of the Academia Sinica such as Hu Shih and Lin Yutang, Smedley helped to form the League of Civil Rights in order to publicize to the outside world the lack of civil liberties under Chiang. After the stories in *Chinese Destinies*, she wrote the first book on the Kiangsi soviet, *China's Red Army Marches* (1934), which was based on first-hand accounts by Communists like Red Army Commander Chou Chien-ping, who for a while had recuperated in her Shanghai apartment. Smedley herself became seriously ill in 1933 and went to Russia to recuperate. After spending most of 1934 in the U.S. visiting family and endeavoring to find employment with U.S. papers and periodicals, Smedley returned to China. By December 1936, she was in Sian, reporting on the famous "incident" in which Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped by Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang. Shortly thereafter she moved to Yenan and is credited with prodding the international correspondents to come there to see the bandits for themselves. During the war with Japan, her powerful pieces and her energetic personal effort to relieve the condition of the wounded brought in much international aid for medical supplies and helped to establish the Chinese Red Cross. Her letters to America sent along with Mao's brought Bethune and other Western doctors to China, and her personal appeal, to Nehru, together with that of Chu Teh, resulted in five Indian doctors plus medical supplies being sent.

It is important to an understanding of Smedley in the 1930s to point out that she refused to align with any one group in China. We have found out that although Smedley was in touch with American Communist Party people in China, she refused to allow her work to be censored by them or to follow the CP line of that time of attacking only the Japanese imperialists, not Chiang. Yet, while her sympathies were totally with the Chinese Communists, Smedley wrote a chapter for a book edited by Madame Chiang Kai-shek (*China Shall Rise Again*) when she saw that it would be advantageous in getting aid for the Chinese wounded. Her range of friendships was the most varied possible: from Lu Hsün (with whom she edited a book on Käthe Kollwitz), Mao Tun,

*L. to R.: Smedley, G. B. Shaw, Mme. Sun Yat-sen, Ts'ai Yuan-pei, Lu Hsün, Shanghai, 1933* (Lu Hsün t'u p'ien-chi, *Peking: Ren-min mei-shu ch'u-pan she, ed., 1957, p. 44)*

Madame Sun Yat-sen, Ting Ling, and Chu Teh to Stillwell, Freda Utley, British Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, Evans Carlson, Hilda Selwyn-Clarke (wife of Hong Kong's medical director), and Episcopal Bishop Logan Roots.

Although she chronicled the revolution and its effects on women, it must be noted that Smedley was less effective in working with Chinese women. She tried to set up a birth control clinic in Shanghai as she had in Berlin, but could not. She worked closely for a time with Madame Sun Yat-sen, but they split up eventually because of "personality conflicts." Apparently, her only close female Chinese friend was Ting Ling, the famous novelist and activist for women's causes, with whom Smedley kept in touch by correspondence until her death.

Some of Smedley's views on women's issues contributed to her difficulty in getting along with Chinese women. It is clear from her China pieces and others going back to *Daughter of Earth* that Smedley consistently emphasized the need for economic self-determination for all women as the key to their independence. She never labeled herself a feminist, nor did she ever talk or write of the liberation of women outside of or separate from the liberation of all who were oppressed. Her position on the need for economic independence for women was in line with the mainstream of the communist Chinese Women's Association. However, when Smedley touched upon or hinted at sexual liberation, as she sometimes did, she hit a raw nerve and created distance between her and most of her Chinese sisters. Perhaps Smedley had hoped that the Chinese could leap from patterns of man-woman relations in the clan system to that of free love without passing through the stage of monogamous marriage. And while there is no evidence whatsoever, and even statements to the contrary, that she had any affairs while living among the Chinese, it would have been consistent with her personality to have been outspoken on the issue.

Added to this were cultural differences. It is not hard to imagine the shock of the puritanical women in Yenan when upon arrival Smedley threw her arms around Mao, Chou, Chu Teh, and others and gave them "big kisses." Not long after this she again endeared herself by announcing that all the wives who had survived the Long March with their husbands should be divorced because they were feudal minded. Mao's wife, Ho Tzu-chen, once even went so far as to threaten to kill Smedley. According to Helen Foster Snow, who was there at the time, as a result of the tension generated Smedley was asked to leave Yenan.

Marching from Yenan in September 1937, Smedley wore her usual outfit—a white blouse and baggy pants. Then, just before entering Sian, the mischievous actress donned a Red Army uniform knowing full well it would cause a sensation. Critics later used pictures of Smedley in this uniform as evidence of her simplistic identification with the Communist Chinese cause. Unfortunately, the straight Westerners missed the point; the Red Army uniform, not her usual garb, was put on in order to stir up publicity and bring attention to a cause. Smedley realized the distance that separated her from the Chinese and knew that she could never fully identify with them, even given her own lower-class background. This is a theme that runs through most of her books. As she wrote in *China Fights Back* (1938):

> *Tonight as these hungry men sang, and then as they marched away to their beds of straw or cornstacks spread on mud floors, their singing had more meaning to me than ever before. Their voices were like a string orchestra in the night. I, who have food this day, realized that I can never know fully the meaning, the essence of the Chinese struggle for liberation, which lies embedded in the hearts of these workers and peasants. I am still an onlooker and my position is privileged. I will always have food though these men hunger. I will have clothing and a warm bed though they freeze. They will fight and many of them will die on frozen battlefields. I will be an onlooker. I watched them blend with the darkness of the street; they still sang. And I hungered for the spark of vision that would enable me to see into their minds and hearts and picture their convictions about the great struggle for which they give more than their lives.*[5]

*"My friends of Hankow days: Major Frank Dorn; Gen. Chou En-lai, representing the Chinese Communists in the Chinese Government; the author; Lt. Col. Evans F. Carlson; Mr. Robert Jarvis, American Consular official." 1938 (A.S.U. Archives)*

Smedley spent 1938 living in Hankow and waiting for the expected Japanese attack. Her wholehearted dedication to the causes she believed in brought her respect and admiration from diverse people, including T. V. Soong, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, Freda Utley, John Davies, Tilman Durdin, Jack Belden, and—her closest friend—Evans Carlson. She worked officially with Dr. Robert K. S. Lim on publicity for the Chinese Red Cross and was a special correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian.* During this period Smedley was extremely effective in bringing together various factions and became more obviously self-confident, humorous, and warm.

After the fall of Hankow Smedley joined the New Fourth Army. As her days with the army are vividly described in *Battle Hymn of China,* we need only summarize them by stating that she shared the men's incredible hardships, helped to set up Red Cross stations and to minister first aid to the wounded. She was also a very effective speaker at mass rallies. In 1950 Liu Liang-mou recalled her rising with great difficulty because of ill health to speak to a large crowd in Changsha. Once on her feet, she was transformed into a ferocious and passionate speaker, her rhetoric profoundly stirring the crowd. Her purpose was to raise money for medical supplies and Liu reports her to have been extraordinarily successful on that day.[6]

Although her work with the New Fourth Army was fulfilling in terms of serving a cause, the time itself was lonely for Smedley. A sense of her emotions is gained from the following letter written to Freda Utley in June 1939, while she was with the guerrillas.

Dearest Freda,

The last days of Hankow still remain in my mind as rare, unusual days from the psychological and human viewpoint. I still think of Shaw's "Heartbreak House" when I recall them. As you remarked at the time, no person on earth is more charming than the American journalist abroad, particularly the cultured serious-minded ones. But I wonder what it would be like were I to meet those same men on the streets of Chicago. Gone the Magic! The only ones who have maintained some contact with me were Evans and Frank. Evans wrote me a short note from Shanghai and sent it here by Belden who came here for a week. Then Evans remembered to send me a copy of one of his articles in *Amerasia*. And, as Frank Dorn returned to America, he wrote me a long, human letter from the ship. But then a ship is much like Hankow—an island on which one is thrown back upon oneself. I suppose he has forgotten me by this time. Once Durdin asked someone in Chungking where I am—so he remembers I am somewhere in the land of the living.

I sort of pine for the magic of Hankow. It was the bright spot in one decade of my life. There I met foreign men, some of them rotters, but most of them with the charm that belongs to many men of the Western world. They themselves do not know how very different they are from the Chinese. Though I have never liked to be treated as bourgeois women are treated, still the foreign men from England, America, and perhaps France have a deep and unconscious attitude of respect for women; a little feeling of protection for women; of helping a woman; and a kind of gentleness toward her. Often his kindness blended a bit with tenderness or a breath of romance. It is difficult to explain, because it is there as an atmosphere. In the Chinese man this is totally lacking in all respects. There is not even friendship and comradeship between man and woman in China. The foreign word "romance" has been taken into the Chinese language to mean sexual intercourse in its general use in China. For a Chinese man to even touch a woman's arm or hand means something sexual and arouses shock.

So, for ten years I lived in this desert, and because of this, I found a magical place. Since then I have thought much of this. Shall I return to the Western world, or shall I remain here? I fear I must remain in China. Hankow was a rare exception, and I believe all of us felt the same about it. I wish to retain it as a precious memory. I think often of the play in which many persons of different classes are on a foundering ship in mid-ocean. Class distinctions fall away as they face death together, drawn closer by humanity. But when the storm passes and the ship is saved, the old cold and cruel class distinctions returned. I believe that to be Hankow.

Love,
Agnes[7]

*Smedley Talking with Women's Committee of the 5th War Zone, Laohokuo, Hubei, December 1939 (A S.U. Archives)*

Agnes Smedley's closest emotional tie during this period was with a ten-year-old boy orderly, Shen Kuo-hwa, whom she wanted to adopt as her Chinese son. Her story of their relationship was so admired by Hemingway that he included it in the first edition of his edited volume, *Men at War.*

Increased danger from the Japanese in 1940 and ill health caused Smedley to leave her beloved New Fourth Army. To its leaders, a continuation of her influential writing was top priority. She went to Chungking, but because of failing health she was ordered by Dr. Lim to go to Hong Kong. In September 1940 she went to Kweilin, Kwangsi, and then flew over Japanese lines to Hong Kong. For a while she recuperated there with friends (Hilda Selwyne-Clarke). Then with the fall of Hong Kong imminent and being broke as usual, she borrowed money from Evans Carlson to return to her estranged family in San Diego.

During the 1940s Smedley produced her most important work. She continued to write book reviews for several journals such as the *New Republic,* but her main task, outside of lecturing and talking on the situation in China, was to complete a book which is now a classic (and was translated almost immediately into Chinese), *Battle Hymn of China,* and to start on the Chu Teh biography. After publication and deserved critical praise for *Battle Hymn* in 1943-44, Smedley achieved relative peace in her personal life. her friendships with Edgar Snow and Jack Belden deepened as her book, lectures, radio programs, and debates with such people as Walter Judd proved her mastery over herself and her material.

The mid-1940s were spent at the Yaddo writers colony in upstate New York. There she acquired many new and rich friendships, including Katherine Ann Porter and Toni and George Willison. Her interest in drama continued. Besides going to the theatre whenever possible, she worked on a play about the liberation of Chinese women by the Chinese Communist Party. She also loved to root around in gardens in these years. Her interest was in "a good tomato," not beautiful flowers.

Smedley's life of relative peace and productivity ended abruptly on February 10, 1949, when the U.S. Army released a report on the Sorge spy ring (produced by General MacArthur's staff) which identified her as a Soviet spy since the early 1930s. Smedley immediately went to court, quickly forcing the Army to recant in public. But the political atmosphere was charged with anti-communist witchhunts which were to culminate in McCarthyism. The suggestion now was ever in the air that Smedley was a communist and/or traitor of some sort.[8] All of this made it impossible for her to find enough work to support herself. Her nerves were shattered. When the news of victory in China came at the end of the year, she was ecstatic. She was also fed up with America; so, despite her poor health, Smedley decided to return to China. She went to London, intending to wait there for a visa. On May 4, 1950, she underwent surgery in a London hospital to have two-thirds of her stomach removed, because of ulcers. On May 6, Agnes Smedley died. A few days later in a Quaker meeting house in New York a simple, plain speaking memorial service was held, led by Edgar Snow, and attended by two hundred friends.

There was little public mourning over Agnes Smedley's death anywhere except in China. Lead articles in Chinese newspapers by Ting Ling, Mao Tun, and other friends mourned her death. These then were republished in a commemorative volume along with selected translations of her work.[9] The Chinese expressed outrage, bitterly accusing the United States Government of murder for hounding Smedley into fatal illness and destitution because she supported the Chinese people. She remains today a heroine in Chinese eyes and is buried in honor outside of Peking. But in America her name continued to be subject to insult and ridicule. In 1956 when perhaps her most important work, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh*, was published, it was hardly noticed. By the 1960s Agnes Smedley was all but forgotten.[10]

If we have accomplished nothing else in this short introduction to Agnes Smedley, we hope that we have exploded the myth that Smedley was a simple, passionate woman who therefore is not to be taken seriously.[11] She was an intelligent, complex woman and an extraordinary human being. Just for an American woman of her class background to become as liberated in her work and life as Smedley is extremely difficult, then and now. That she deliberately wrote simply and honestly about herself and China reflected her writing skill and the complexity of her character.

Agnes Smedley's fate since her death is more than ironic, it is tragic. Today many Chinese know and revere her name and few Americans do. To the Chinese she was an American "China hand" who stood up for the Chinese people and paid for it with her life. To Americans she ought to mean much more. The loss from our national consciousness of the example of a woman of Smedley's stature is a tragedy—especially for American women. For example, *Daughter of Earth*, which is at last beginning to receive recognition in the U.S. as a classic, is certainly one of the earliest and most candid accounts of what it means to grow up a lower-class woman in sexist America. Smedley's independence, courage, and strength as a "revolutionary writer" (as the Chinese call her) should fortify us all, women and men, to persevere in our own way in the struggles of our turbulent times. Smedley's good friend, Toni Willison, may well have put it best:

*Agnes Smedley, garden at Yaddo, New York, 1948 (A.S U Archives)*

> *Agnes Smedley was a great woman, one of the greatest of her generation She was a great American in our best tradition, a fearless fighter for equality and justice, for a fair share of the earth's blessings for all. Even more, she was one of the great citizens of the world, a seer with eyes to see the outlines of the greater societies of the future, one with a clear view of the rocky slope up which the common man everywhere is so painfully toiling.*

## Notes

1. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York, 1931), p. 905.
2. M. N. Roy, *M N. Roy's Memoirs* (Bombay, 1964), p. 488
3. Rewi Alley, *Yo Banfa!* (Peking, 1952), pp. 15-16.
4. Ibid., p. 16.
5. *China Fights Back* (New York, 1938), p. 123
6. *Shih-mo-t'e-lai — Chung-kuo jen-min chih yu* [(Agnes) Smedley — Friend of the Chinese People] (Peking, 1950), pp. 40-41.
7. Freda Utley, *Odyssey of a Liberal* (Washington, D.C., 1970), pp. 206-07.
8. The most detailed, explicit attacks on Smedley were made by Major General Charles A. Willoughby in his book, *Shanghai Conspiracy the Sorge Spy Ring* (New York, 1952).
9. *Shih-mo-t'e-lai — Chung-kuo jen-min chih-yu* (full citation in note 6).
10. The exception is Japan. There a translation of her Chu Teh biography sold well and in 1967 Ishigaki Ayako, a good friend of Smedley's from the 1940s, published the first and to date the only biography (ours is forthcoming) of Agnes Smedley — *Kaisō no Sumedorē* [Remembering (Agnes) Smedley] (Tokyo, 1967).
11. Typical are the numerous remarks about Smedley in Kenneth E. Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-45. A Persuading Encounter* (Ithaca, 1971).
12. Read at the memorial service for Agnes Smedley at the Friends Meeting House on Stuyvesant Square, New York City, May 18, 1950.

# The Dedicated

by Agnes Smedley

Across the great historical stage on which the Chinese revolution is being played, appears and reappears the figure of a woman.

At first the figure looks delicate and the hands as frail as those of a child; but when one sees more clearly, the slender body, of a little more than ordinary height, looks tough and wiry and the hands but thin from constant labor. The hair, smooth and black as a soft summer's night, is sometimes cropped close like a boy's, sometimes grown longer and clasped at the nape of the neck in a narrow brooch of green. At times the figure is clad in the uniform of a soldier, at other times in the faded cotton trousers and jacket of a woman of the masses; and at still other times in the elegant silk gown of a lady of the ruling classes.

This slight figure, now clad in a long silk gown that falls in an unbroken line from the throat to the ankles, turns her face to us. The face belies the costume. For here is none of the expressionless, doll-like beauty, or the cold passive indifference, or any of the calculating selfishness or cruelty that characterize the faces of women of the ruling classes. Instead, the face turned toward us is lit by some fire that gives the eyes and entire countenance an expression of some living, burning conviction. It is a face of inspired intelligence. The eyes, black and shining, see everything, understand everything. In every action of the figure, in every word uttered on this vast historical stage, are expressed two forces: one, love and passion; the other, a conviction that is hard and unyielding in its purpose.

The woman may speak for herself, as do many actors on the old feudal stage of China, who often step forward to explain what role they are playing. It is best that the woman speak quickly, lest tragedy overtake her and silence her tongue forever. So, let her speak:

"My name is Chang Siao-hung. I was born in 1902 of a very rich and well-known family of Hongkong. All the wealth of the large joint family of which I am a member was earned by my grandfather, who began life as the servant of a British enterpriser.

"A few years after China was defeated in the Opium Wars and was forced to admit opium to the country, pay heavy indemnities, grant concessions of land, and cede Hongkong to the British, this Englishman offered my grandfather money and credit if he would help him exploit the new colony. This offer was accepted, and after a number of years my grandfather's share in the property was valued at ten million *taels*, including land, houses, godowns, shops, wharves, gambling houses and the opium traffic.

"Because he was from a very poor family, my grandfather had not received a feudalistic education; and since he had always been in close touch with Western capitalists, he was much influenced by capitalist ideas and methods. Socially he retained many feudal customs, and with these he united capitalist methods of exploitation that enabled him to squeeze wealth for his family out of every workingman and woman that crossed his path.

"Because of his wealth he was much honored and admired by the old people of South China, yet many disapproved of some of his new ideas, such as the education of the women of his family. Fortunately my sisters and I were permitted to receive an education, and some of the men of our family went to foreign lands to study. But such free ideas extended only to my grandfather's own family; never to the families of others or to the masses of the people. For like his British partner he poisoned the masses with opium, and he sold men and women into slavery.

"My grandmother was a very cunning and capable woman of the old school, and despite the wealth of the family she was never satisfied unless more money was pouring through her fingers into the family coffers. After my grandfather died, shortly before the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty, my grandmother became almost supreme authority in our home. This was because my father, who as eldest son should have assumed his position as head of the family, was sunk in opium smoking and cared little for anything but personal indulgence. My own mother was the capable and ambitious daughter of a big salt merchant, and she was a perfect support for my grandmother.

"I had two sisters and four brothers, but my mother seemed to love me, the youngest child, more than any of her children. This was more than unusual, for I was a girl, and it is said that even a club-footed son is of more value than a daughter with the virtues of eighteen Lohans, while to educate a daughter is said to be like watering another man's garden.

"When I was six years old, one of the men of our large family returned from abroad and established a coeducational school in Hongkong. He induced my mother and grandmother to permit me to lead the way for girls by attending this school. This caused a great sensation at the time, for coeducation was not permitted by either the Chinese or British.

"While my family was thus being penetrated by modern

ideas in some respects, it remained feudal and colonial in others; and like other foreign and Chinese merchants in South China, it was rooted in the purest kind of mercenary commercialism. Money-making was the one aim of existence, the one thing treasured, the one god before whom all bowed in cringing respect. Money-making excused everything, explained everything, and to it everything in life was subordinated.

"One of my earliest memories was of the slave trade in which my grandmother took a part. For, as I said, she was a woman never satisfied unless money was pouring through her fingers. The slaves in whom she dealt were always girls, courteously called *mui tsai*—which literally means domestic drudge—and there are Chinese and British apologists who try to dignify their lot by calling them "adopted daughters."

"This phrase is one of the many whited sepulchers of China. The *mui tsai* are slaves, bought and sold for money, and their owners have the power of life and death over them; they can be resold whenever or wherever it pleases the fancy of their owners; they may be sent as workers into the factories to earn money for their owners; they may be used as prostitutes; they may be sold to rich and degenerate men as concubines. These girls are the daughters of peasants of South China provinces, peasants so poor that they cannot afford the luxury of maintaining their daughters until they can be married into other families.

"There are few homes even of moderate means in South China and Hongkong that do not have one or more girl slaves who do all the heavy drudgery of the household. The beautiful girls are usually sold for high prices as concubines of rich men. Still others are sold as prostitutes into the singsong houses or to the "flower boats"—that is, brothels—of Canton, Macao, Hongkong, or all the cities of the South Seas. Beautiful Cantonese concubines or prostitutes are also much sought after by the rich of Shanghai and other North China cities.

"Our own home rested upon the labor of such girl slaves, for all of our servants were *mui tsai.* More still. Into our home were brought girls to be sold to the rich men of our class. My grandmother did the selling. As a tiny child I recall standing by my grandmother's side when men came to look at these girls. Sometimes it was a fat official from Canton, or a rich merchant, or the sensuous and lazy son of merchants or officials of Canton or Hongkong. They came looking for concubines. Less often it was a man or woman seeking household slaves. When such men called in their long, flowing silk gowns, they would be served tea, and my grandmother would express concern about the health and prosperity of their honorable families.

"Then, when the purpose of their visit was finally discussed, the girls would be brought in, nicely dressed for the occasion, their faces beautifully powdered and painted. But the buyers were very cunning business men and could not be cheated, and often they would compel the girl to lift her long, broad trousers or her gown that they might see the color of the skin on her legs. Now and then a man would take a cloth, wet it, and rub the powder off a girl's face to make certain the skin was fair beneath. And there were times when he would feel her body here and there.

"When satisfied, the man would go close to the girl, grin sensuously into her face, and ask: 'Would you like to be my concubine?' The girl, her head bowed to her chest, would answer 'Yes.' And big tears would roll from her eyes, leaving long traces on her sad face. Then she would withdraw and the purchaser would bargain with my grandmother; but before paying the full price he would often insist upon proof that his commodity was a virgin. If after the first night he found she was not, he would return her and demand his money back.

"Some men have chosen to say the taking of a concubine is a 'love mating,' and that although the first wife is the conventional way of maintaining the family and providing for the worship of ancestors, the concubine system provides for the element of love. But I ask—love for whom? The concubine is a slave, bought and sold, and she can be resold if it please the fancy of her master or if he becomes poor and needs money. Or she may be presented by her influential owner to one of his subordinates. Love! This purchase of helpless poor women by rich men is what the ruling class of my country call love. But even for the men who buy these women it is nothing but physical lust.

"Do you think I speak of the dark ages, of the past, or even of a quarter of a century ago when I was a child—of customs dead and gone? No, I speak of the present. For women and girls are sold into slavery in North, South, East, and West China today; and as my country has sunk into deeper poverty and deeper subjection, so has the buying and selling of slaves sunk deeper roots. The highest officials and militarists in the various governments, whether Nanking, Canton, or Peking, have their purchased concubines, and Chiang Kai-shek, whom the foreigners so admire and support, 'put away' four 'wives' in order to marry a woman on whose connections he expected to build his personal and political fortunes.

"I was the daughter of a wealthy family, blessed with every comfort that money could buy. My mother loved me dearly, protected me, planned for my future happiness. But even as a little child I used to wonder what would have happened to me had I been born the daughter of a peasant or some other poor man, as were the girls in our kitchen and those who passed through the lady-like hands of my grandmother. Even as a little child I could never forget the tears of girls as they said 'yes' to some rich man as they were being sold, and in my childhood fantasies I thought of myself as the general of a powerful army going forth to fight and free all the slave girls.

"In my childhood I also heard of the trade in men slaves, many of whom were kidnaped, while others were shipped abroad under various guises that were supposed to satisfy the consciences of the 'sentimentalists.' One of these guises, in use down to the living present, is called contract labor. Poor peasants, workingmen, or disbanded soldiers of South China are induced by promises of high monthly wages, by tales of great riches, or even by simple offers of enough to fill their empty stomachs, to enlist by the thousands for labor on the plantations or in the mines of British, Dutch, or French colonies in southeastern Asia, which we call Nanyang, or the South Seas.

"One often hears of the wealth accumulated by Chinese 'emigrants' to Nanyang. A few, indeed, accumulate wealth. But for every such man tens of thousands die in poverty and despair, often under the lash of cruel task-masters. Some send back money to their families and it is millions in the year; but there are millions of men of my country forced to seek livelihood in the colonies of foreign imperialist countries, and if they can send back three or four dollars a month from their meager earnings it mounts into the millions. But for each man it is but a miserable pittance.

"I can bring you closer to this method of sending men to the plantations and mines of European colonies now in these modern days. In Hongkong there is a branch of a great Dutch trading company that supplies workers for the tin mines of the Dutch East Indies, mines lying in such an unhealthy territory that men live but a short span of years there. Yet two or three times a year this Dutch Company sends Chinese labor recruiters into Kwangtung Province to relate tales of the riches awaiting men who will go to the Dutch East Indies. The labor recruiter is paid a number of dollars per head, and this he shares with the Chinese official who permits this recruiting and who gives passports to the victims.

"The recruits are shipped, in lots of a few hundred, to Hongkong, where the Dutch Company examines them to see if their chests are broad, their arms and bodies strong enough to do the work that no men in the Dutch East Indies will do. From Hongkong these men are packed together in transport ships in which cattle could not be transported and live, and shipped away. Arriving at a port in the Dutch East Indies, they are landed and confined in pens where legal documents in the Dutch language are placed before them to sign. Unable to read even their own language, they certainly cannot read Dutch, and knowing nothing of legal documents they are helpless before them. Nor were they ever told that they would be forced to put their fingerprints on a document that signs away their freedom as human beings for ten long years.

"For this document binds them to labor in the tin mines for ten years at a wage set by the Dutch and under conditions that make them slaves. This document was not laid before them in China where they would have had a chance to choose. But now, if they refuse to sign, they are informed that they must repay the company for the passage and food to this strange land, and they must leave the country at once and pay their own passage back to China. If they still protest, there is the boot of their new Dutch owners, and there is the lash, freely used. In despair most of them sign because they are bound to the wheel of poverty and ignorance; and those who object, as do a few one-time soldiers whom the Dutch call 'bad elements,' sign anyway, because 'to fight is but to die, and to return is but to mingle with the desert sands.'

"And then they are transported to the tin mines where so many die that new shipments of men are made twice a year. Those who try to escape are captured and brought to trial before a court whose judges are the managers of the mines; and as punishment there is the lash and a prolongation of the contract of slavery.

"Today among the slave-owners in Nanyang are not merely British, Dutch, French and Americans. There are now Chinese millionaires. These are sons of Chinese fathers who spent their lives in hard toil or who, by unusual and devious means, accumulated great fortunes. These men have now joined the class front of the white owners of plantations and mines. Racial lines have vanished and there has emerged only hard class lines, drawn in the blood of the workers on whose bodies the wealth of Nanyang rests.

". . . But I have wandered from my own personal story. I thought this story of human slavery would interest you; for it is one of the countless facts of human subjection that awakened me to my duty, that showed me the face of the ruling class.

"I was telling you that my family was a mixture of feudal practices and of modern capitalist ideas, and that when it combined the two methods of exploitation it pressed a great fortune out of the bodies of those that came within its power. By the accident of birth into such a family and at such a period, I was able to go to school and to enjoy many rights that girls of former periods and in other parts of China could not enjoy. When I was a child the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown and a flood of new ideas poured through my country. Men and boys cut off their cues, the symbol of subjection, and women and girls in the centers of ferment no longer bound their feet. My own feet were never bound.

"But one of the most important periods of my life began May 4, 1919, when I was sixteen years of age. One of my sisters had married a number of years before and was living in Canton where her husband was a high official. She was fortunate that her husband's family lived in Swatow and that she could have her own individual home in Canton. But she was very unhappy because her life was one endless round of bearing children. She now had seven children and each year a new one arrived, leaving her weaker and in deeper despair. Her husband spent most of his life at banquets of officials, in gambling, and with sing-song girls.

"My mother had permitted me to go to Canton and live with my sister during my period of study in the middle school. It was here that I was living when the May fourth movement was begun by the students and professors of Peking National University. They held great demonstrations against the Peace Conference of Versailles when the imperialist powers posing as China's friends set their seals of approval upon Japanese occupation of Chinese territory and upon the infamous Twenty-one Demands which Japan had forced upon the old and corrupt Peking Government. This movement forced the Chinese delegates to withdraw from the Peace Conference.

"But for the youth of China, especially the intellectual youth, the May fourth movement was more than political. It came closely upon the heels of the great October Revolution in Russia, bringing with it a reappraisal of all social values; and it dealt a death-blow to feudal ideas in the intellectual young. In Canton the students were much more free and vigorous than those in British Hongkong, and I was intoxicated by this movement. It was like a fresh, invigorating breeze through a musty and ancient dwelling.

"The leading professors and students of Peking National University were publishing the *New-Youth,* a magazine that introduced the intellectual renaissance into China. One of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party was its editor. Through this magazine I came into contact with Marxian doctrine and began the serious study of the social sciences. I was at the time a member of the Kwangtung Students' Union, which was very radical, and I became one of its leaders.

"In that year we students of Canton organized schools for poor children, and from this time onward I learned not merely to pity and sympathize with the poor but to place my knowledge at their disposal, to serve them because all that I enjoyed in life came out of their bodies. And during the two following years in Canton, I spent almost all my free time out of school as a teacher in the workers' night schools. I never seemed to tire, for the workers who came to study were like the thirsty seeking water in the desert.

"This same period of my life, filled with hard work and a great purpose, was also filled with great struggles with my family. With the exception of my two sisters, both of whom were unhappily married, every member of my large family

tried to force me into marriage. It was not merely my mother who pleaded with me, the tears rolling down her cheeks, but it was my brothers, my uncles, aunts, cousins, and all the variations of these relatives, until about a hundred people were bent upon the one goal of rescuing me from my 'dangerous tendencies' and binding me to a marriage with some young millionaire. Repeatedly I refused to marry, but my mother would only seek some other young millionaire whom she thought would please me more. Every visit to my Hongkong home was filled with misery and struggle; every visit my relatives made to my sister's home in Canton, every letter that came to me, were filled with new suffering for me.

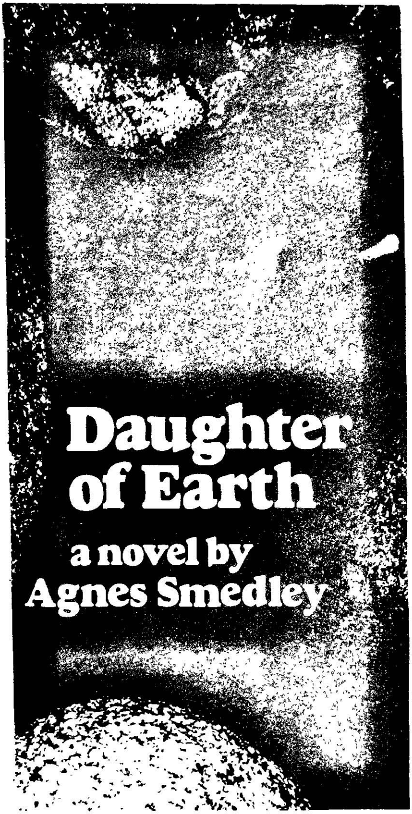
"But I refused, with firm decision, to marry, and I was determined to study, become a physician, and serve the workers and peasants of China. This struggle with my family was my first great struggle with feudalistic influences, and it was a fearful struggle that closed in upon me from every direction for a period of over two years.

"I was eighteen when my eldest sister, married to a high official in the Peking Government, secretly sent me money to escape from Canton and go to her in Peking. One day I left Canton, went to Hongkong, boarded a ship without the knowledge of my family, and left. For many years I did not return. From Peking I wrote my mother, asking her for money to study medicine in Peking, and threatening, if she refused, never to see her again. Finally her love for me prevailed, and she bowed her sad, confused head to my wishes.

"In Peking I became a student in the famous Peking National University, and along with my preparatory studies for the profession of medicine I began the thorough and serious study of Marxism. I read many books, many short stories and articles, many translations; and I came into intimate contact with writers for such publications as *New Youth* and *Creative Society,* the latter issued by a new literary society founded by Communist intellectuals in Shanghai. My whole student period in Peking was filled with hard work; and the more I studied of medicine, the more it became clear to me that most diseases are social and would not even exist in a free Communist society.

"I had studied in Peking for five years when the May thirtieth movement began. This movement followed upon the massacre of students and workers by the British police of Shanghai, May 30, 1925. Far more than the May fourth incident this massacre revealed to us that imperialism is the great hindrance to the advancement of China. We determined to fight it down. In the worker and student strikes, and in the anti-British boycott that swept through the country after this, I became very active. But in the following year still new forces inimical to China's progress were clearly thrown into high light, for on March eighteenth in Peking the Chinese police massacred a large number of students demonstrating against an ultimatum by the imperialists—an ultimatum before which our Chinese rulers not only crawled, but shot down those who protested.

"I was in the demonstration when the massacre began. The police raised their rifles and began to shoot into the mass meeting where thousands of students, including young children, were gathered. When the crowd began to escape from the rain of bullets, the police shot them in the backs. I stood, unable to move for some time, watching the police lift their rifles, fire into the backs of fleeing youths, laugh, and fire again. Deliberately they shot down people as if they were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shooting birds, and there was something so unbelievable about it, something so inhuman, so barbarous in the way it was done, that I could not turn away.

"Then I turned and tried to go away. But I stumbled and fell, and I found I had fallen upon the body of a girl, the blood streaming in a slow, dark rivulet from her neck. Then something fell upon me heavily, and something else, pinning me to the body beneath me. Unable to stir, I heard agonizing gasps, felt the quivering and convulsions of the bodies above me, and something warm and reeking began to pour all over me, through my clothing, down over my neck and my face. From afar I heard the crack, crack, crack of rifles and the screams of men and women. I cried for help and through my mind flowed a sense of utmost futility, blended with cold horror. Then I knew no more until hurrying voices awoke me and I opened my eyes to find girl comrades in my dormitory washing the blood from me, while a doctor was feeling my body.

"In this massacre the bodies of my school comrades saved my life. The only injury I received was a bullet wound through the upper part of my arm. I had not even felt this. But this massacre showed us another enemy to the progress of China—the militarists and officials.

"In the spring of this same year I became, after six years of study in Peking, a physician. I had originally planned to go to some foreign country to continue my studies, but the revolutionary movement was very high and its army was planning to leave Canton and march against the militarists of the North. So I left Peking at once and hurried to Canton, which was the revolutionary center of China.

"Since I had left Canton the great general strike of Hongkong workers had taken place, crippling British Hongkong and revealing in every step the unconquerable power of the working class and the historic role it was destined to play in the Chinese revolution. This strike had sent the first great chill of fear and hate through the Chinese ruling class and through the foreign imperialists who sat enthroned in the chief cities of our country. The strikers had spent their time during the strike building modern paved roads in and around Canton, until the city had taken on an entirely new aspect.

"Also throughout Kwangtung Province I found that millions of peasants had organized their Peasant Leagues and were throwing off the ancient feudal chains of landlordism and usury and the more modern shackles forged by militarists and officials. It was not the first time in Chinese history that peasants had revolted, but it was the first time in history that they had come under the leadership of a clearly revolutionary party with a social program for their emancipation. This party was the Chinese Communist Party, which had organized the workers and peasants and, two years before, had allied itself with the Kuomintang.

"Through such developments as these I had long since realized that my childhood dreams of leading an army to free the slaves were childhood dreams indeed. For here was a social system in the making, a system rising to free the vast laboring masses of China. The girl slaves that I had once longed to free were now regarded as human beings, and to buy or sell them was a criminal offense punishable by death; no longer did men have to sign away their lives to the plantations or in the mines of colonial slave-drivers.

"But at the same time, as I passed through Hongkong and visited my family for a few hours, and as I now moved about Canton, I realized what a dangerous and fearful situation the revolution was facing. For the workers' and peasants' organizations were young and inadequately armed. And the feudal merchant class, the old officials, and all the bourgeois intellectuals that had sprung from their ranks were adopting every measure possible to regain their lost power and crush the rising mass revolution.

"I myself was a member of the Chinese Communist Party. Of my own free desire and under instructions from my party, I joined the medical corps attached to the army known as the Ironsides. With my hair cropped short and in military uniform, I was one of the women revolutionaries who marched from Canton to the Yangtze Valley.

"Those of us who have lived through the Great Chinese Revolution can never forget the released energies and hopes of the millions of hard-laboring peasants and workers. Half-naked, bent with the oppression of centuries, the peasants arose by the millions, straightened their backs, and began the work of emancipating themselves. They fought in the revolutionary army, they acted as guides, they stood by the hour along routes which the army took on its march, waiting with free food and drink for our forces. They began to cut down rent and usurious interest, to cancel all illegal taxes, and in many places to confiscate the land of big landlords and drive out the reactionary gentry. Apart from their direct aid to the revolutionary army, throughout South China there began great peasant struggles in which thousands fought hand-to-hand battles with old militarist forces, with landlords and the gentry. They did not wait for the revolutionary army to come; but with the news of our approach they began holding meetings, and then their fierce struggles against the forces of reaction began.

"The famous Ironsides to which I was attached became known more and more as a Communist Army. Among our commanding officers were a number of Communists who later remained true to their principles and are today to be found among the leaders of the Red worker-peasant armies of Central China. Our army was unconquerable, we covered ourselves with glory, and with the help of the masses nothing could stand against us. We were among those that captured Hankow and Hanyang, and we laid siege to Wuchang until it fell. My body was now strong and tough, and there seemed no limit to my ability to work, whether in the lazarettes or in carrying the wounded from the field after hard battles. With my hands I closed in death the eyes of hundreds of the most heroic youth of China. With each man or woman whom I watched die for the revolution, the deeper did the iron of conviction penetrate my being. The tears that used to flow from my eyes dried up, and in their place developed an energy that knew no end.

"Our army marched on to Nanchang, and it was while we were in Nanchang that the counter-revolution broke and the frightful White Terror began. The military officers within the ranks of the army were sons of landlords and of the gentry, or they sprang from the professional militarists or capitalists of the cities. From the first they had feared and hated the power of the workers and peasants, and as the masses emancipated themselves more and more these officers, together with the landlords, the gentry, the capitalists of the cities, united in one front to preserve the old order, to kill the new in birth.

"Within our army the officers especially hated the political councils which gave the common soldiers human

rights. When the officers were forced to attend these weekly councils of soldiers and officers, common privates had the right to arise and demand from them explanations or accounts of expenditures of money; or to ask why the officers had not paid the wages that the soldiers were supposed to get. All the ancient corrupt privileges of the officers, by which they had made fortunes, were swept away.

"Finally the time came, as it had to come, when the forces of reaction and the forces of revolution came into open conflict. In Shanghai Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the White Terror by a frightful massacre of workers and intellectuals. Then the Terror was let loose upon the peasants who had dared lift their heads and stand upright. Hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers, badly armed and but newly organized, were slaughtered. All the forces of feudal reaction were unleashed and the soil of China ran red.

"But the revolutionary forces fought to preserve the revolution. In Nanchang our uprising against the reaction failed; then, led by Communist officers of our army, we marched through the entire length of Kiangsi and made for Swatow, which we hoped to capture, and then to Canton, which we hoped would again become the bulwark of the revolution. But the revolution was too young, the forces of the reaction, now actively reenforced by the imperialists in the city, too strong. In Swatow we fought and were defeated and in this fighting I found it necessary to lay aside my medical kit and take up a rifle. When we had reached South China, I felt that I knew all the reaction was capable of doing, for I was from the reactionary ruling class, the dealers in human slaves, the dealers in opium. And although I did my duty to the wounded, there were times when that was no longer possible. I fought. And I fought with hard hatred.

"Defeated–yes–temporarily. Our forces retreated, separated. Some went into Fukien and Kiangsi. Some of us made our way to Canton. Dressed as a lady of fashion, I took up my residence in Canton. There were times when I had wavered, thinking still that a united front of the masses and the bourgeoisie might be possible until the grip of the imperialists upon China was broken. But the crushing of the Canton Commune dealt the death-blow to the last lingering illusion in my mind.

"On December 11, 1927, the workers and peasants of Canton arose and with very little bloodshed established the Canton Commune. A few soldiers, taking shelter in the Central Bank, fought, and in driving them out the Bank was destroyed by fire and some surrounding buildings were burned. Then the Commune began the organization of a revolutionary worker-peasant government, the center for a new free society of the Chinese people.

"Three days later the reactionary troops, accompanied by a number of foreigners and led by some of the most feudal of Chinese officers, captured Canton. They were assisted by foreign gunboats lying at anchor in the Pearl River. The Commune was overthrown and the slaughter of the people began. Such scenes of carnage have perhaps been witnessed in past Chinese history when dynasties have been overthrown and new ones established, but certainly the slaughters of rebel peasant masses in past centuries and the slaughters of Genghis-Khan when he overran other countries could have been no more savage than that of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals of Canton by the White troops under the direction of feudal officers.

"Whole sections of the city were ruined by fire and fighting, and workingmen and women, student men and girls, were murdered by thousands in the streets. The White officers killed every workingman or student they met–sometimes they halted them, then shot them dead; or they had them captured, forced to their knees, and beheaded or sliced into bits. Every girl with bobbed hair who was caught was stripped naked, raped by as many men as were present, then her body slit in two, from below upwards. Often the girls were no more than fifteen or sixteen, and officers, giving interviews to eager British journalists from Hongkong, said: "The bobbed-haired girls are the worst; they are very arrogant and talk back defiantly. We have had to kill hundreds of them.'

"The bodies of the slaughtered were piled up like the carcasses of pigs. On one day alone four thousand prisoners were marched outside the city and mowed down with machine guns, in the presence of smiling officials of the foreign imperialist consular services, who posed to have their pictures taken against a background of corpses. Five officials of the Soviet Russian Consulate were arrested, marched through the streets, their pockets robbed of all the money they had, their shoes taken from their feet, and were then murdered. One woman of the consulate was murdered by impaling her on a huge stick driven through her body from the vagina.

"Four years later, in Shanghai, I listened in silence as the wife of an American military intelligence officer told of how this woman had been killed and showed a photograph she had of her, impaled. After this official's wife ceased speaking, she remarked self-righteously: 'But you know I have not the least sympathy with such a woman!' Then I knew, even if I had never known before, that the ruling class of the United States is no more humane than the feudal reaction of China, and that when the American workers one day begin their struggle to free themselves from the slavery of capitalism they will face a Terror just as fearful as anything we in China are facing.

"After days of slaughter in Canton the rich began to venture into the streets. I also went about, clad as a bourgeois lady in a gown of silk. As such I was safe. As a poor woman I would have been cut down. But now I walked about and saw wounded and dying workingmen in the streets, left as they had been cut or shot down. I saw bourgeois women go through the streets, bend over wounded and dying workingmen, and beat out their brains with chunks of stone or wood. All the humanity that is supposed to slumber in the well-bred breasts of women of the ruling class, whether of China or of other lands, was now revealed to me in all its horror. I heard from others that some such women took penknives and carved out souvenirs of flesh from the dead bodies of the Soviet officials before these were dumped in the mass trenches that furnish the last resting place of the revolutionary martyrs of Canton.

"The regime of the bourgeoisie and the militarists was reestablished. All labor unions except the yellow Mechanics Union, a semi-official union whose officers had helped the reaction, were disbanded. The merchants of the city, whose armed volunteer corps had been dissolved by the revolutionary government and even by Dr. Sun Yat-sen years before, now reorganized and heavily armed it. The Peasant Leagues throughout the province were smashed and thousands of peasants killed in the struggle.

"And now all the old feudal-capitalist order of Canton was reestablished. Opium dens flourished, and opium became one of the chief articles for sale, import and export; gambling,

banquets, prostitutes again became the chief amusement of the officials. The traffic in girl slaves again flourished and in the months that followed I was again personal witness to the buying and selling of girls from the peasantry into the homes of the merchants and official classes, as household drudges, as concubines.

"The new regime then returned also to the ancient system of robbery and taxation of the peasants; it auctioned off to the highest bidders the right of collection of taxes from the peasantry. These bidders would offer millions of dollars to the government for such rights. Then, with their own armed forces, they were turned loose upon the peasants to levy and collect taxes. They paid the government what they were pledged to pay; all surplus they kept for themselves. The new government placed no restrictions upon the extent of this surplus. Like vultures, these private taxation vampires bled the peasants white. All the human rights the Peasant Leagues had won, all the hopes and dreams of the peasants, were crushed by the newly established regime of merchants, politicians and militarists. Like clouds of locusts these settled over Kwantung and all China.

"I have seen the face of the Chinese ruling class; which means I have seen the face of the ruling class of imperialist countries also. For in the reestablishment of the reaction in China they have worked together like the blood brothers that they are. There is no atrocity, no brutality, no crime against human beings of which they are not capable. This class has nothing to offer China—nothing but debased destitution, nothing but slavery, nothing but corruption and final subjection.

"Of course I am a Communist. What else can any person be who desires that the vast masses of toiling human beings shall become free men, developing for themselves a culture such as has been denied them through all ages? As a convinced Communist I am working in the ranks of the revolutionary workers and peasants of Central China, where we have established a Chinese Soviet Government, where we are laying the foundations for a human, a free Communist society. In this territory I am a physician, a public health worker; and all that it was my privilege to learn as a member of the privileged classes I have now placed at the disposal of the peasants and workers.

"We started with nothing but the ancient system of brutal ignorance and subjection; today we have schools, hospitals, clubs, dramatic societies—as also free land for all that labor, and our varied political and military defense organs. In this territory I travel far and wide, establishing health institutes, lecturing on public health and hygiene, teaching women the care of themselves and their children. I have looked so long into the eager faces of millions of the oppressed, thirsty for knowledge, that now my eyes can see nothing else. When, for one reason or another that I am not free to state, I am compelled to make trips to the cities of brutal reaction, like Shanghai, these eager faces are always before me, calling.

"As for my old feudal family, the family into which I was born—they are to me but a dark and ugly memory, and to them I am but a fearful dream. My hope is that if I ever face them and their kind it will be as a part of the Red Army, to destroy all that they value, to bring to human existence those whom they enslave. They once tried to pin me to a marriage bed with a millionaire that I might breed more creatures like themselves. But I chose a man I loved from the ranks of the revolution, and for permission to live with him I asked no priest or policeman whose blessings give sanctity to bourgeois marriages. My husband fell before the Terror, and although my heart lies with him in his nameless, unknown grave in Hankow, still he died heroically for the masses of our country, and his death has but steeled me for further unceasing labor.

"You wished to know the role I play in China. It is enough to say that I am a Communist, for that means I am fighting in the ranks for a new world. It means that I may one day cease to appear on this stage of historical events—but it means also that all that I work for now will be carried to fruition by the revolution of which I am but a part. Now I will be on my way, for there is much to do and I never know how much longer I have to do the share allotted to me."

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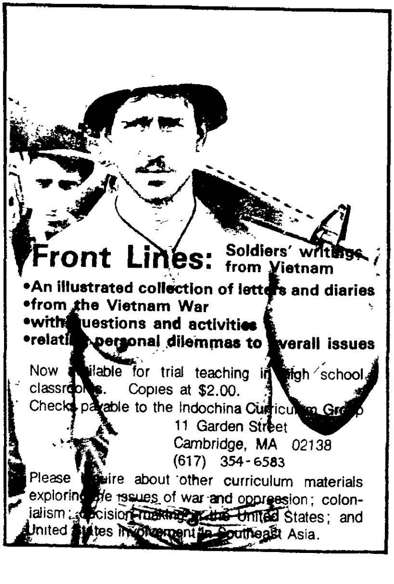
"The Dedicated" first appeared in a collection of short stories by Agnes Smedley, *Chinese Destinies* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1933). The Feminist Press, which reissued *Daughter of Earth* in 1974, will publish in mid-1975 an anthology of stories on Chinese women titled *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution* including "The Dedicated." This volume will be edited and introduced by Jan and Steve MacKinnon.

# Women and Leadership in the Chinese Communist Movement, 1921-1945

by Jane Price

A prominent issue in recent literature on the women's movement in China is the relationship between feminism and the revolutionary process. Discussion and debate are still ongoing concerning the legitimacy and compatibility of feminist goals such as equal social, economic and political rights for women as an interest group in relation to the political and economic objectives of the People's Republic of China.[1] Much work remains to be done to explain the role of women in the Chinese Communist movement. This essay will examine the involvement of women in the Chinese Communist Party's major educational institutions for leadership personnel prior to 1945. A focus on the leadership question should not obscure the fact that feminist issues were often much more directly confronted at the grassroots level of Chinese society. Yet studies of the participation of women in responsible positions of authority are one indicator of the progress of female emancipation within the Chinese Communist movement.

Clearly the Chinese Communist Party drew some strength in its early years from the Chinese women's movement and the crescendo of attacks on traditional social and family relationships during the May Fourth period. Feeding into the Chinese Communist movement, those on the feminist left envisaged the emancipation of women through revolution that promised an end to exploitative economic and social relationships. That the radical women's movement merged with the Chinese labor movement before 1927 can be attributed to the immediacy of economic issues which rallied both male and female proletarians and the influence of Marxism-Leninism on early revolutionaries.[2]

After shifting to a rural revolutionary base in 1927-28, the party continued to stress class conflict as the path to rapid change. Under the influence of class analysis of the cleavages in Chinese society, male-female issues remained secondary in importance in the revolutionary movement. But feminist issues were periodically invoked if supportive of larger revolutionary concerns.

This basic Chinese Communist approach to "the woman question" as it related to revolutionary strategy was embodied in concrete programs for preparing leadership personnel. The earliest facilities for training cadres recruited and prepared women for positions of responsibility. There was an appreciation of the potential of female participation in the revolution but female leaders were not recruited to pursue purely feminist goals. Women's issues were not set apart from and indeed could be at times subordinated to more general revolutionary issues. Women at leadership training schools appear to have been treated as individuals rather than as members of a specific interest group. This general policy approach remained right up until 1949.

Before 1930, educational institutions in the Soviet Union generated a substantial proportion of the Chinese Communist Party's top leaders. Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow, which opened in the spring of 1921 to train functionaries for Soviet nationality areas and Asian revolutionaries, cultivated many of the Chinese Communist Party's directing personnel for the pre-1927 period. A number of its graduates were women, including those from its Chinese section. Student enrollment figures for the mid-twenties show five hundred out of approximately two thousand Soviet and foreign students were female. The exact male-female composition of the Chinese section (which attained its maximum size of one hundred in 1924) is unclear, but rough estimates indicate women constituted ten percent of the Chinese student body.[3]

The curriculum for women was the same as for men, including military training during summer vacations from the mid-twenties onward. Course work on the history of the women's movement was introduced in 1922, but the bulk of the curriculum consisted of Marxist-Leninist theory and historical treatment of the labor movement, world revolutionary movements, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[4]

Although there is biographical information on only the most prominent women graduates of Communist University of the Toilers of the East, all of them appear to have devoted much of their subsequent careers to work involving women. Hsiang Ching-yü, who had headed the CCP Women's Department before training in Moscow in 1925-26, returned to work with both male and female workers. She led propaganda work for the Wuhan Federation of Trade Unions and in 1927 for the Hankow CCP Committee. Ts'ai Ch'ang, another early female Chinese Communist leader who studied at Communist University of the Toilers of the East in 1924-5, returned to head campaigns to organize Chinese women workers. She was also one of the few women in the General Political Department of the National Revolutionary Army during the first phase of the Northern Expedition. Ch'en Pi-lan, who had married P'eng Shu-chih, became the editor of *Chung-kuo fu-nü (Chinese Women)*[5] in the mid-twenties.

Fellow alumna Yang Tzu-lieh (Mme. Chang Kuo-t'ao) continued her studies in the U.S.S.R. at Sun Yat-sen University. This institution replaced the Communist University of the Toilers of East from early 1926 to 1930 as the leading Soviet school preparing leadership for the Chinese Communist Party. The curriculum and teaching methods of

Sun Yat-sen University were similar to Communist University of the Toilers of the East, but reflected the Stalinist preoccupation with ideological uniformity that had emerged in the Soviet Union by the late twenties.[6] In roughly 1926, about forty of the five to six hundred students at Sun Yat-sen University were women, but the University did not offer even a single course on the women's movement. While the school did devote one of its assembly meetings to a celebration of the March 8 Women's Day, there are reports of efforts to deny Chinese women students equal treatment with the men.[7]

A number of female graduates of the Sun Yat-sen University managed to assume ranking leadership positions upon their return to China, especially those associated with the "Twenty-eight Bolshevik" faction of the Chinese Communist leadership. Again, their assignments were mainly in women's movement work. For example, Meng Ch'ing-shu and later Tu Tso-hsiang headed the CCP Women's Department in 1931. Chang Ch'in-ch'iu took charge of women's work in the Oyüwan Soviet area beginning in the summer of 1931.[8]

Prior to 1927 the preparation of most Chinese Communist Party leaders within China itself took place in "united front" schools operated under the auspices of the Kuomintang. These schools were influenced by Soviet educational models and dealt with the woman question as part of urban and rural mass movements in China. The most outstanding schools were Shanghai University and the Peasant Movement Training Institute in Canton, which prepared organizers for the urban labor movement and rural peasant movement respectively. At both institutions the administrative and instructional staff were predominantly Communist. Female activists for leadership roles in the Chinese Communist Party were recruited and developed here.

Little is known of the specifics of the instructional program of Shanghai University, which opened in 1923. Descriptions by former students suggest that feminist issues were discussed as part of general Marxist theory and Chinese Communist labor movement strategy. There were courses in Russian, English, social philosophy and the social sciences. Ts'ai Ho-sen taught material concerning the origins of private property and the family system. Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, the head of the social science department, and Chang T'ai-lei led informal study groups at Ch'ü's home on the women's movement, labor movement and problems of the Chinese and Russian revolutions.

Shanghai University placed a great deal of emphasis on labor movement work. Since a sizable portion of the Chinese proletariat was female, Shanghai University students became involved with the cause of the urban working woman. Through this apsect of the study program students such as Yang Chih-hua gained valuable experience organizing female laborers. These activities also prepared promising female activists for leadership positions in the Chinese Communist movement.[9]

Women were not excluded from early programs to train rural leadership for the countryside. However, the rural areas were well behind the cities in opportunities for women in the work force and remained bastions of conservative sentiment on the position of women in family and social life. As a result, women were less active in the peasant movement than in the urban labor movement and rural training facilities for female activists were quite limited.

The principal source of trained leadership for the rural areas before 1927 was the Peasant Movement Training Institute operated under both Kuomintang and Communist auspices. Statistics on female students in the six Institute classes in Canton between 1924-26 and the seventh class in Wuhan in early 1927 are quite poor. However, fragmentary records show two women out of 33 students in the first class; 8 percent "women workers" among the 142 members of the second class and seven women out of 76 students in the fourth class.[10]

Women's issues did not figure heavily in the Peasant Movement Training Institute curriculum, which focused on propaganda and organizational techniques for the peasant movement. I have found only one reference to the specific issue of women's role in Chinese rural society—a "research topic" on the "position of women in Chinese villages" assigned to the sixth Institute class by principal Mao Tse-tung. Student investigation of this topic was one of fifty-two reports compiled by Mao into a handbook entitled *Nung-min wen-t'i ts'ung-k'an* (Collection on the Peasant Problem) for peasant movement organizers.[11] Like the Institute curriculum, the vast majority of these reports concerned peasant issues and areas of cleavage between rural classes.

There is no information on the work assignments of female Institute graduates in relation to those of males, but given strong traditional restrictions on interactions among opposite sexes in the rural areas, it is likely that most female graduates worked primarily among other women in peasant villages.[12]

We hear little of the recruitment and training of female leadership during the Kiangsi period. One can find evidence of the Chinese Communist Party's concern with women's problems in the form of a Central Committee Women's Department and in efforts to set up Women's Unions in rural villages. In 1931 and 1934 the Central Executive Committee of the Kiangsi Soviet Government promulgated two marriage laws. Women in the Soviet areas participated actively in agricultural production and furnished leadership in local public affairs.[13] However, there is little discussion of women or women's issues in major Chinese Communist leadership training schools, such as the Academy of Marxian Communism and the Soviet College.[14]

Materials available for the Kiangsi period give the overwhelming impression that most resources and leadership training facilities were devoted to military concerns. The most influential leadership training institutions at that time were the Worker-Peasant Red Army School (founded in the fall of 1931) and its successor, the Worker-Peasant Red Army Academy, which opened in Juichin in November 1933. The schools were quite professional in orientation and tried to upgrade military skills for Red Army leaders at various levels. There is no reference to women's problems or work among female rural inhabitants in the political curriculum of either school in the documents available.[15] However, among the two thousand trainees at the Red Army School between 1931-33, drawn primarily from lower-level Red Army cadres, there was a women's detachment of two hundred[16] Materials issued by the Red Army Academy, which specialized in training higher-level Red Army commanders, contain no mention of female students. Women did participate in the Chinese Communist military, primarily at lower levels in local defense forces, intelligence work and medical work.

Schools catering to female leaders did not flower until

the Yenan period. In Yenan there arose a complex of schools to meet increasingly diverse leadership requirements of anti-Japanese resistance activities. Military, technical and administrative experts were all needed to staff the rapidly expanding Border Regions. A number of institutions such as K'ang-ta (Anti-Japanese Military and Political University), the North Shensi Public School and Yenan University had facilities to train female leadership. For a brief period one institution—Chinese Women's University—was devoted to cultivating women activists.

K'ang-ta, the successor to the Red Army Academy, was said to have graduated 1,000,000 students for anti-Japanese military and mobilization work between June 1936 and the mid-forties. There are no figures on female students at the main K'ang-ta campus in Yenan or its outlying branches. It is unlikely that any women belonged to the prestigious "high-level" first class of 240 Red Army cadres. However, subsequent classes, which featured a mix of Red Army leaders, non-Border Region students and local peasants, included women.[17] Moreover, female students played prominent roles in school affairs and furnished the leadership for school fund-raising campaigns.[18]

Women at K'ang-ta prepared for mobilization work through military drill, physical labor in production campaigns and course work on the united front and problems of the Chinese revolution.[19] This format was emulated at the North Shensi Public School, which operated between the summer of 1937 and 1939. There is little information on the disposition of female graduates at either school. At the North Shensi Public School the policy was to assign male graduates to the front lines for guerrilla operations and retain women behind the lines for mobilization work.[20] It is likely that K'ang-ta and other Chinese Communist schools followed similar practices.

Despite evidence of sex-typing in graduates' work assignments, K'ang-ta, the North Shensi Public School and other "united front" schools devoted little attention to feminist concerns in their curricula. Even at the all-female Chinese Women's University feminist issues played a very small part in the educational experience. Women's University opened on the anniversary of International Women's Day, March 8, 1939. It operated for two years under the leadership of Wang Ming (Ch'en Shao-yû) and his wife Meng Ch'ing-shu. Theoretically, the school catered to "worker-peasant women," but most of its trainees came from "intellectual backgrounds." Eighty percent of the first class of five hundred, for example, had at least a middle school educational background. Graduates were assigned to lead war work, political work in enemy areas, teaching, medical work, propaganda work, or cooperative organizing, with special attention to women in the mass movements. A few went on to further military training at K'ang-ta.

The student body at Women's University was divided among six general classes, one high-level research class for "theoretical cadres" and a "special class" in basic literacy skills for women of worker-peasant background. Of the subjects required of all students only one dealt with the women's movement. It was overshadowed by nine other courses in historical materialism, Marxism-Leninism, philosophy, problems of the Chinese revolution, problems of the Chinese Communist Party, Three People's Principles, military education and hygiene.[21] That feminist concerns were subordinated to general revolutionary objectives can also be inferred from Wang Ming's speech at the opening ceremony of the University calling for "steadfast wives, good mothers and filial daughters."[22] The transitory nature of Women's University suggests that one of the primary functions was to educate the independent-minded female intellectuals new to Yenan to face the sober reality of revolutionary work in backward rural areas.

Chinese Women's University was short-lived and some of its functions were taken over by Yenan University after the fall of 1941. Yenan University trained specialists in administration, natural sciences, medicine and artistic and cultural work for the Border Regions and operated a special "female section." Of a total of 1302 students in 1944, the "female" section claimed 74 and catered to the same leadership requirements as Women's University.[23]

While the schools discussed above did not constitute the entire high-level Chinese Communist leadership training complex, I have been unable to find mention of female activists cultivated at any other schools. Taking the history of Chinese Communist leadership education from the birth of the Party to the *cheng-feng* movement, what can be said about the position of women in the evolution of the Chinese Communist leadership structure?

First of all, in areas other than the military there is evidence of efforts to train women for high-level Chinese Communist leadership positions. Women were exposed to educational experiences that were largely identical to those of men. Women were recognized as a potential leadership resource and during their training at Chinese Communist schools prepared for the same roles as men. In theory women were expected to perform functions far removed from household duties; to anticipate work assignments abroad or far from their homes, to see themselves as part of the vanguard of a vast social, economic and political movement attacking traditional values and division of labor. Much in the existing literature on the women's movement in China has been written about the significance of organizing activities, participation in productive labor and military service for female emancipation. The schools discussed in this essay certainly helped prepare women for leadership roles in the day-to-day task of making a revolution.

Yet, looking closer, there was considerable sex-typing in the work assignments and subsequent activities of women graduates of the high-level Chinese Communist leadership schools. Of the female trainees at these institutions with available biographical information, the overwhelming majority were channeled into positions associated with the mobilization

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of women. Few rose to Central Committee membership or headed Central Committee departments other than that for women. One will also have to look far and wide for evidence of any female among ranking commanders and commissars of the People's Liberation Army.[24]

To account for the discrepancy between reality and rhetoric on the equality of women in China, several explanations can be invoked. One is sexism, as charged by the writer Ting Ling in her essay "Reflections on March 8 Women's Day."[25] Another is revolutionary realism. In assuming some high positions of responsibility in the Chinese Communist movement women did not fare significantly worse than workers or peasants. One can argue that as with peasants and proletarians, women were best suited to organize and lead their own kind. To have placed male "outsiders" in leadership positions for women's movement work, or vice-versa, would have produced explosive social disruptions dysfunctional for the general revolutionary movement. Like the labor and peasant movement, the women's movement expanded at a rate that outstripped the supply of capable leadership personnel. Thus, qualified female leaders were assigned as fast as they were produced to head mushrooming female mobilization activities. Other explanations offered in the literature on the Chinese Communist Party and the women's movement for low levels of female participation in leadership roles stress the small percentage of women with higher education in China, traditional constraints on women of all social backgrounds leaving the confines of the courtyard; and competing outlets for feminist impulses in bourgeois political movements.[26]

It has been suggested that the position of women in the Chinese Communist movement would have been stronger had the party come to power through the labor movement in the urban areas.[27] The evolution of the Chinese Communist leadership structure and its sensitivity to women's issues would support this point of view. The party's transfer to the countryside and a peasant base reinforced, relative to feminist objectives, the more conservative features of Chinese Communist leadership structure and revolutionary strategy and removed the CCP from the urban working class with its significant female component.

While there was much revolutionary potential among the Chinese peasantry, the Chinese Communist Party still found peasants considerably more difficult to mobilize on a sustained basis than the urban working class. One can look at the history of the Chinese Communist Party in the countryside as nearly two decades of experimentation and debate on what constituted successful peasant strategy. The organizational techniques and mobilization appeals credited with winning over the countryside delicately balanced rural class interests and showed sensitivity to the values and traditions of Chinese peasant life.[28] One consequence for women was a "go slow" policy on family and marriage issues, as summarized so succinctly in Wang Ming's admonition to the first class of Chinese Women's University. Of course the Chinese Communist Party's position on women could also find practical and theoretical justification in Marxism's preoccupation with class issues and class conflict as the motive force of revolutionary change. This standpoint saw female emancipation best guaranteed by striking first at exploitative socioeconomic relationships.

Numerous references to guerrilla warfare and civilian involvement in mobilization work should not obscure the fact that much CCP personnel and material resources were devoted to the military from the late twenties through 1949. That victory in 1949 came through over twenty years of civil war rather than a rapid takeover in the cities meant that military priorities and military leaders were dominant forces in the Chinese Communist movement.

Of all aspects of the Chinese Communist leadership structure, the military was by far the most inaccessible to women and impervious to feminist concerns. This was in part because much of the top command structure was generated under political influences outside the Chinese Communist movement. Many ranking Communist commanders were formally trained at schools such as the Paoting Military Academy, Yunnan Military Academy, or the Whampoa Military Academy. A number studied at the Red Army (Frunze) Military Academy in the Soviet Union during the mid and late twenties or at other Soviet military schools.[29] On the whole, all of these schools were heavily professional in orientation and did not view extensive social experimentation as their principal objective. In the Chinese Communist Red Army itself, political controls to curb the authority of commanders or political work among the troops did not challenge the image of the military as a masculine preserve.[30]

None of these schools were open to women, nor were the most prestigious Chinese Communist institutions preparing military leadership. I have found no evidence of female participation at the Red Army Academy in Juichin or in the first class of K'ang-ta before its conversion to a "united front" school. Further evidence of the exclusion of women from military pursuits can be found in the biography of K'ang K'o-ch'ing. K'ang graduated from the third class of the Red Army School, which trained primarily lower-level military leadership. She recalled that she and a middle school student named Liang Ying were the school's first female cadets. K'ang directed troops in battle only once, during an accidental encounter with the enemy while working in the rear lines in 1934. She related that she and Ho Ying, the sister of Ho Lung killed in battle in Hupeh, were the only two women to have commanded regular Red Army forces. K'ang devoted most of her time to inspection work behind the lines.[31] Women appear to have been involved primarily in lower-level military activity in either guerrilla operations or mobilization work behind the lines.

As with the military, I would expect the percentage of women in civilian leadership positions to be highest at the lower levels, with the persistence of considerable sex-typing in work assignments. Women in the pre-1949 years became increasingly involved in agricultural production and military-related activities but few were freed from household tasks.

The mixed picture for the women's movement during the revolution was the setting within which feminine emancipation in post-1949 China unfolded and helps explain why women have made few inroads into the leadership structure inherited from the pre-1949 period. Offsetting the heritage of the past, women in China may benefit from drives to democratize the People's Liberation Army and from efforts to sustain egalitarian revolutionary ideals in mass campaigns. There will be gains for peasant women as educational facilities, new ideas and urbanites penetrate the countryside. The extent of female representation in positions of leadership of all levels will continue to serve as an important indicator of the emancipation of Chinese women.

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1. See especially the debate between Salaff and Merkle ("Women and Revolution: The Lessons of the Soviet Union and China") and Nancy Milton ("A Response to 'Women and Revolution' ") in *Women in China*, ed Marilyn Young (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1973).

2. Suzette Leith, "Chinese Women in the Early Communist Movement," *Women in China*, pp. 57-60.

3. Former students recalled Wu Hsien-ch'ing, Ho Yü-lien, Chia Chih-hua, Chang Liang, Chang Hsiu-ying, Hsieh Fei-ying, Wang Pao-ying, Ts'ai Ch'ang, Hsiang Ching-yü, Yang Tzu-lieh (MMe. Chang Kuo-t'ao) and Ch'en Pi-lan among the Chinese women at the University. See Yueh Sheng, *Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution· A Personal Account* (Lawrence, Kansas· University of Kansas Center for East Asian Studies, 1971), pp. 25, 138 and 171-72, and Yang Tzu-lieh, "Mo-ssu-k'o tung-fang ta-hsüeh" ("Eastern University in Moscow"), *Chan-wang*, No. 169 (February 16, 1969), p. 28. There were seven women in the Chinese section in 1925 and fifteen in 1926. For other figures on women at Communist University of the Toilers of the East see Wang Chueh-yuan, *Liu-O hui-i lu (Memoirs of Study in Russia)* (Taipei: San-min chu-chu yu-hsien kung-szu, 1969), p. 11, *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 246-47; and Rodger Swearingen and Paul Langer, *Red Flag in Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 24.

4. Jane L. Price, "The Training of Revolutionary Leadership in the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1945" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1974), Chapter Two.

5. See the biographies of Hsiang Ching-yü and Ts'ai Ch'ang in Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism, 1921-1965*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass · Harvard University Press, 1971). On Ch'en Pi-lan see the biography of P'eng Shu-chih in *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, ed. Howard L Boorman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), III, pp 73-75.

6 Sun Yat-sen University was founded under Comintern auspices in the fall of 1925 to develop leadership for the National Revolution in China Until the spring of 1927 it recruited students from both the Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang. Thereafter until closing in 1930 the University restricted trainees to CCP members and produced among its graduates the "Twenty-eight Bolsheviks" who dominated Chinese Communist Party affairs in the early thirties. On Sun Yat-sen University activities see Price, "Training," Chapter Five.

7 See Chang Kuo-t'ao, "Wo ti hui-i" (My Recollections), *Ming-pao*, No. 30 (June 1968), p. 93. Chang recalled that Pavel Mif, rector of Sun Yat-sen University, tried to organize female students into a "nursing training class," which the women found very demeaning.

8. See the biography of Chang Ch'in-ch'iu in Klein and Clark and James P Harrison, *The Long March to Power. A Political History of the Chinese Communist Party* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), p. 187 and 222-23

9 On Shanghai University see Price, "Training," Ch. Two. Yang Chih-hua was named Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai while at Shanghai University. She has been vice-chairman of the Chinese Women's Federation since 1957 and a member of the CCP Central Control Commission since 1962.

10. Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Pen pu i-nien lai kung-tso pao-kao kai-yao" (Outline of a Report on the Work of Our Bureau during the Past Year) *Chung-kuo nung-min*, No. 2 (February 1, 1926), pp. 174, 181 and 198-99.

11. "Ti liu-chieh nung-min yun-tung chiang-hsi-so pan-li ching-kuo" (The Experience of the Sixth Class of the Peasant Movement Training Institute) Chung-kuo hsien-tai shih tzu-liao ts'ung-k'an, *Ti-i tz'u kuo-nei ko-ming chan-cheng shih-ch'i ti nung-min yun-tung (The Peasant Movement in the First Revolutionary Civil War)* (Peking· Jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1953), pp. 23-32.

12. This was the case for graduates of the Kuomintang's Women's Movement Training Institute. It opened in Wuhan in 1926, was headed by Soong Ching-ling and prepared female organizers specifically to work with peasant women during the Northern Expedition. See Leith, p. 62.

13. Delia Davin, "Women in the Liberated Areas," *Women in China*, pp. 73-75.

14. These schools prepared directing personnel for the Chinese Communist Party apparatus and the soviet areas and both opened in 1933. Price, "Training," pp. 302-307.

15. Ibid., pp. 308-41.

16. K'ang K'o-ch'ing identified herself as commandant of the Women's Detachment at the Red Army School in 1932. This group consisted of two hundred local peasant women organized in Yütu, who then marched to Juichin and attached themselves to the Red Army School. After six months of training they were sent to the rural districts. See Nym Wales, *Red Dust* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 216.

17. Price, "Training," Chapter Seven.

18. Tung-yuan she, *K'ang-ta tung-t'ai* (The Situation at K'ang-ta) (Hankow), 1939 , p. 50.

19. Price, "Training," Chapter Seven.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ch'en Shao-yü (Wang Ming), "Tsai Yen-an Chung-kuo nü-tzu ta-hsueh k'ai-hsueh tien-li ta-hui shang ti pao-kao" (Report on the Opening Ceremonies of Chinese Women's University in Yenan), *Kung-fei fan-tung wen-chien hui-pien* (Collection of Documents on the Reactionary Communist Bandits), Yushodo Microfilms, Reel 18.

23. Price, "Training," Chapter Seven.

24. This point is underscored in Salaff and Merkle, "Women and Revolution," p. 174.

25. Ting Ling charged that the Chinese Communist Party was systematically mistreating its women cadres and exploiting them. See Price, "Training," Chapter Eight; and Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 38-42 For publicizing these views Ting was attacked during the *cheng-feng* movement.

26. See Leith, p. 67.

27. Ibid., p. 66.

28. See my discussion of Chinese Communist peasant mobilization strategy in Jane L. Price, "Chinese Communist Land Reform and Peasant Mobilization, 1947-1948" (unpublished East Asian Institute essay, Columbia University, 1970).

29. For example, Yeh T'ing and Chang Yun-i were Paoting graduates; Yeh Chieh-ying and Chu Te attended the Yunnan Military Academy, Lin Piao, Lo Jui-ch'ing, Sung Jen-ch'iung trained at Whampoa; and Nieh Jung-chen and Liu Po-ch'eng studied at the Red Army (Frunze) Military Academy in the Soviet Union.

30. Price, "Training," Chapters Three, Six and Seven.

31. K'ang recalled that Hsü Hsiang-ch'ien had organized a women's regiment in Szechuan under female commanders Chang Ch'en-ch'u and Chang Kuan-lan. By 1937 there were still eight hundred women among Hsü's troops in Ninghsia but the women's regiment was headed by a male, Wang Ch'uan-yuan. Just before the Sian Incident the women's regiment had fought with Mohammedans and those captured by the enemy had been sold, executed or married to Mohammedans. See K'ang's biography in *Red Dust*, pp. 211-218.


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# Collectivization, Kinship, and the Status of Women in Rural China

by Norma Diamond

The marked improvements in the status of women in China since Liberation have attracted the attention not only of scholars but also of those of us involved in the women's liberation movement.[1] Some observers feel that the question of women's equality has been solved in China through the destruction of feudalism and capitalism, by the introduction of new legislation (particularly the 1950 Marriage Law), and by the entry of large numbers of women into the agricultural and industrial work force. Others, more skeptical, point to the undeniably lesser participation of women in positions of leadership and in political life, to the problem of lower pay rates for women, and to the continuation of a sexual division of labor despite the presence of women in a wide variety of jobs. They take these as evidence that a socialist system still fails to come to grips with the basic question of male oppression and the special conditions of women.

Salaff and Merkle,[2] for example, argue that while the revolution freed women to the extent that it removed the legal restrictions which bound them to the family and prevented them from participating in production, it failed to take the final step of liberating women from their special form of oppression within "the most intimate private areas of life" or from the male supremacist thinking embedded in the traditions and historical experience of the society. The Chinese do not deny that there is a struggle against continuing male chauvinism in the home and the local community. Salaff and Merkle's position is that these male chauvinist attitudes are perpetuated and buttressed by (1) the continuation of the nuclear family; (2) the cost considerations of socializing housework; and (3) the relative non-participation of women in the military either now or during earlier stages of the revolution, and they are pessimistic that China can or will end the oppression of women as a social group.

In her rebuttal, Nancy Milton[3] points out that the demands of revolutionary Chinese women never included the total abolition of the family, but only of the feudal-patriarchal family and the restriction on free choice in marriage. The goal was a happier family life, not universal divorce. Speaking to the point of women gaining the means of coercion (armed force) she points to the inclusion of women into the PLA since 1958 and the military role of women in the mass media. And on the third point, she argues that it is a question of time and economic means in a society like China which is not yet an advanced industrial society. The question of housework is gradually being resolved as living standards rise and more funds become available for child care facilities, services and simplifications of household tasks. In brief, she counsels patience, as opposed to the school of thought which says "once again we have been betrayed by promises." But both analyses are wrong in part, in what they fail to include in their discussion, for the problem is more than one of "bourgeois" vs. "revolutionary" feminist demands or traditional societies vs. modern industrializing societies.

In 1972, Soong Ch'ing-ling, head of the All-China Federation of Women and a vice-chairman of the People's Republic, wrote an important article discussing the question.[4] She is less sanguine than Milton. Although she begins with the assertion that women's liberation, which begins with the democratic revolution, will be completed only in the socialist revolution, she states firmly that it is not yet time for the women's movement in China to shut up shop or for the women's associations to disband. Among the peasantry, still 85% of the population, the "feudal patriarchal ideology" continues despite the presence of women in many kinds of work, in the schools and the military. There are still real problems to be grappled with. unequal pay, unequal access to education, the pressure to produce sons, and the burden of household chores hampering women from full participation in public life. More recent statements also stress the problem of persistence of older thinking. Fu Wen and Hsu Kwang point to the existence of backward elements representing the landlord and capitalist classes, those who look down on women, bar their way to full participation in society and try to turn back the clock.[5] For these and for other recent commentators on the woman question, the campaign to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius is a mass movement that will sweep away the old ideas about women and propel China's women to win complete liberation. The problem is stated as being one of ideology.

To some extent we may pin the problem on ideology. But it is my feeling that this analysis also fails to ask certain questions, specifically what is there in the current organization of society, particularly rural society, that allows for the continuation of the "feudal patriarchal ideology" or creates it in new guise? Must we assume that male oppression of women is so deeply rooted in the human species that even revolution and major restructurings of society are insufficient to abolish it?

It seems imperative to me to rethink how the reorganization of the rural sector since 1949 has affected women, and to determine the extent to which structures *were* abolished (since everyone seems to blithely assume that they

have been). Everywhere in China, the process of socialist transformation of the countryside followed the same sequence: equalization of land holdings during land reform, the formation of mutual aid teams which gradually became the basis for cooperatives, the organization of these into collectives, and the coordination of these, in turn, under the commune system after 1958. However, units smaller than the commune have considerable autonomy. The production brigade, usually based on the natural village, is the unit for collective ownership of land, livestock, machinery and small workshops. The smaller production team, which often coincides with hamlet or neighborhood, is the basic accounting unit in many communes. These residential units hold land-use rights and own some machines, tools and livestock. Below that, there is also some property ownership at the household level, including the private plots which represent 5% of the total agricultural land.

Before Liberation, land holding took two basic forms: household ownership and lineage ownership (with perhaps a third variant of corporate business ownership in the late Ch'ing and Republican periods). Local and absentee landlordism both could result either from small household ownership of surplus lands or from lineage ownership. In either case, the title to land and control over land passed along male lines of descent. Since surname exogamy (marriage outside one's surname group) was mandatory, women usually were married to men outside of their natal community. Villages and hamlets were often composed of large clusters of male kinsmen whose wives were drawn from outside, and whose sisters left the community at marriage. A different pattern would be found in those areas where recurrent political upheavals, natural disasters and/or the pressures of landlordism led to frequent population movement. There, villages tended to be more heterogeneous in terms of surname and women stood a better chance of remaining in their home communities after marriage. This was particularly true in the north and northwest.

Within the traditional system, women were essentially propertyless save for the dowry goods they received at marriage. They did not inherit land or receive it as part of their dowry, and in poor families they often did not even receive a dowry. At all social levels women were the means through which to produce sons and continue the family (male) line. At all but the top social level, they also represented an input of labor to the household economy. Sometimes this was a crucial input, particularly in the southern rice-area, and where tea, silk, cotton or production of cloth constituted a major part of household income. In addition, women were responsible for domestic chores and child care. Their labor was under the direct control of male household heads or an older woman (mother-in-law, eldest sister-in-law) acting as a surrogate for male authority. Where women earned agricultural wages these were paid directly to the household head. Women's powerlessness in the economic sphere was reflected in the customary inheritance rulings which gave widows only temporary control over household-owned land. They could hold it in trust for their minor sons, but as sometimes happened the land was appropriated by the deceased husband's brothers or lineage cousins.

Along with lack of economic power went lack of social power. Women had little or no role to play in lineage organizations. They were lost to their lineage of birth when they married and were never fully incorporated into their husband's lineage until death when they were commemorated as ancestors.

The land reform program destroyed the landlords as a class, cut the power of the rich peasants and undercut the base of lineage power and wealth by breaking up and redistributing lineage estates. These corporate forms of land ownership disappeared as land reverted to household ownership, although technically it was distributed to individuals. In many places, even though women received title to land their status was not markedly changed. Their lands continued to be worked and administered by fathers, husbands, or sons. The Crooks, for example, comment that in the area of Hopei where they were, the individual land deeds were in the keeping of the male family head, who also controlled household finances. Women's consent was needed for selling the land, but it was difficult for women to exercise this right of withholding their consent.[6] Secondly, women often lacked the agricultural expertise needed to take over control of their newly-received land. In some regions, women were not involved in agricultural labor at all, or worked only at certain tasks during peak seasons (weeding, transplanting, harvest). In a speech in 1947, Teng Ying-chao foresaw the problems that women would have during land reform.[7] She urged that there be training of women in all facets of production including side occupations and handicrafts, but most importantly in all aspects of agricultural production as determined by the particular conditions of the area. This organized training for women does not seem to have been universal policy. Had it been, it would have made more realistic the exhortations to women to engage in production in order to win economic equality. As it was, many women continued to have little knowledge about agriculture. The threat to withdraw their landholdings in the course of a divorce was a somewhat empty one: they might have been left economically helpless. The holdings of unmarried daughters were also treated as household property. The writings of the period are unclear about what would be done with a daughter's share when she married. Since women continued to marry into other villages in order to avoid marrying into their own surname group, they could not always make use of the land alloted to them during the land reform period. The best a woman might do would be to "lease" her share to her father or brother. There was some talk at the time of giving engaged girls land allotments in their fiance's village rather than in their natal community. However, we are talking about a short period of time. By 1952, with the formation of mutual aid teams and lower-level cooperatives, a new situation emerged. What were essentially male groups pooled their household lands and labor resources into a larger work unit than the household.

Thirdly, during the land reform period women were encouraged to participate and to throw off all remaining oppression. "Speaking bitterness" through the forum of the women's associations was at first difficult, but as it gained momentum and the criticisms targeted in on male oppression within the family, the women were persuaded to desist. Poor peasant men were in the forefront of the struggle for land reform. Attacks directed at them were thought by some to be a way of aiding the class enemy. Most of the early activists in the women's associations were women from poor peasant households: the husbands, fathers, or fathers-in-law of whom they complained were at the same time the activists in the revolutionary struggle and, as such, "erring comrades to be

reasoned with" rather than the main oppressors.[8] There is some truth in this, but it took the edge off criticisms of male chauvinist thinking at that time.

With the development of collectives in the mid-1950s, a new situation emerged. Little property was retained by the household, and economic powers were vested in a larger group based for the most part on neighborhood and/or former social ties. This development created the conditions for a reconstitution of the localized lineage in ways neither planned nor anticipated. The lineage, minus its gentry/landlord/rich peasant leadership and stripped of religious functions, too often formed the basis of the new cooperative units. Together, a group of male kinsmen held usage rights over land, ponds, forests, orchards, livestock and equipment. Women usually became members of their husband's team when they joined his residence at marriage. Many of the current small-production teams are still referred to by family name, except in multi-surname hamlets or in the case of specialized production teams which recruit across neighborhood boundaries.

With the work unit based on neighborhood, there is often no way to avoid the overlap with kinship ties. Nor is it necessarily undesirable. Ties of kinship, like ties of friendship, feed into cooperative efficiency and help meet the goal of greater productivity, assuming that kin loyalties do not override class awareness. That teams and brigades often have a kinship base is not a new observation. John Lewis, in his study of leadership, makes reference to this.[9] He presents a chart analysis of a production team in Hupei in which the team leader, the assistant leader in charge of field management and the section leader guiding subsidiary occupations are all members of the Yang family of the same generation level, while two other men of the Yang family of another generation are in charge of livelihood and techniques. He further comments,

*In still another production team in Kiangsu which received national recognition in 1960, moreover, the team leader is Liu So-chin. His first elder brother is a secretary of the party branch, his second elder brother is a group work leader, his fourth younger brother is an "advanced worker" and his two sisters are Young Communist League members. For a team of 105 households, it is highly revealing that this single family has attained such a pervasive leadership position. The "proletarian" relationships among family members must be assumed to be of an order different from the strictly neutral relationships dictated by Communist ethics. Although a great deal of research is still required to demonstrate the prevalence of family-dominated leadership at the production levels, it is probable that at this level Confucian concepts of "relational leadership" have found considerable tacit support.*[10]

The same frequency of "relational leadership" is evident also in Myrdal's study[11] where the sons, dauthter, nephews and other kin of Li Yueh-hua, the old party secretary, hold positions of responsibility from the team level up to the commune. At the time of Myrdal's writing, a son and a daughter served with him on the management committee of the brigade. Another son was a team bookkeeper. Two nephews served as leader and member of the management committee of a second team within the brigade. Two others were in cadre posts at the commune level. The daughter and two of the nephews were Party members. The Li households came to the village as migrants in the 1930s but most of the current residents are also migrants who came fleeing the famines of the late 1920s, the war and the KMT White terror. In this situation, the Lis formed a significantly large solidary block. They comprised seven or eight of the village's fifty households, including its most complex extended ones, easily outnumbering any other surname group in the brigade. But they by no means held a clear majority: cadre positions were filled by a range of surnames while some Li family members held no positions of responsibility at all. However, in communities with more time-depth and stable population, a single surname group can dominate decision making simply because they clearly outnumber any other contenders.

Nanwang village, cited as a model in the early days of cooperativization, is a case in point.[12] It is clearly a lineage village, and the three founders of the first cooperatives were Wang Yu-kun, Wang Hsiao-chi and Wang Hsiao-pang, all poor peasants. They were joined by three upper-middle peasant Wang households, which led to struggle between those from poor peasant households and those who were better off. On one occasion, "some of the members wanted to elect Li Wu, a Party member [as chairman], but he [Wang Wen-shuang, an upper middle peasant] made them elect Wang Tan-tan, who was politically backward and no good as a leader."[13] The situation was eventually resolved successfully, with 85% of the village households being drawn into the cooperative under poor peasant leadership, but the struggle to put national and collective interests in first place and to be aware of class struggle still goes on in the anti-Confucius campaign in what is now Nanwang Village Production Brigade.[14]

The dangers resulting from lack of attention to class struggle are not only a move backward to the individualistic "capitalist road," but even a return back to an older order. The Kwangtang press in the early 1960s printed critiques of several production brigades in the region which were apportioning collective funds to repair the ancestral halls, paint new ancestral tablets and rebuild local temples.[15]

Western scholars and Chinese commentators alike have made little connection between the patrilineal structure and lineage control of collective work units and the difficulties of realizing the goal of full equality for women in the rural areas. The household in many rural teams and brigades remains embedded in a network of male kinsmen which has been strengthened by collectivization. To avoid this development, it would have been necessary to force massive transfers of the population, with all the attendant economic chaos and psychological suffering—clearly unfeasible and undesirable. The equalization of women's status has been held back by the necessities of the situation.

How does this relate to women? One of the results of the current structure is that team and brigade affiliations are seen as passing from father to sons. Women are still in-marrying strangers who have yet to prove themselves, or are temporary residents who will soon be departing to get married. There is little incentive to recommend girls over boys for higher education or specialized training, or to prepare them for increasing degrees of responsibility and leadership. Of course, there *are* some women in positions of leadership and responsibility. In the rural areas women are cited as being anywhere from 10% to 37% of the cadres. But this figure includes those assigned to "women's work," creche and nursery attendants, and the leaders of all-female small work

groups within the team or brigade. When it comes to holding wider powers, including leadership over men, the number of women is small.

Moreover, the women who become leading cadres in the rural areas seem often to have led atypical lives or are in circumstances which bring them the support of their natal kin network. This assertion can be documented somewhat by the extant literature and by the small amounts of interviewing I was able to do over two months in 1973 during a visit to China. In Myrdal's study, referred to earlier, the leading woman cadre was not only the daughter of the party secretary and kinswoman to several other male cadres, but in addition she had continued residence after marriage in her father's house while her husband continued to work in nearby Yenan city. In short, an atypical marriage allowed her to stay in the village of her birth, and to advance politically. Crook's earlier study[16] similarly points out that the first woman activist in the community had "the advantage over most married women of Ten-Mile Inn of being a native of the village." Contrary to local custom, she married a man from a nearby hamlet. Her daughter followed the same pattern, thus giving her a wide range of ties.

Matrilocal marriage obviously works in women's favor. But there are other atypical patterns as well which produced cadres and activists. The first labor heroine in Ten-Mile Inn was an adopted daughter-in-law, brought in as a small child to be a future wife and treated as a household slave. When the Peasant Women's Association formed, she was the first to take her domestic grievances to them, and when they resolved her case successfully, she became one of the most active members. After years of humiliation, she set out to earn respect for herself by becoming a pace-setter in spinning and weaving.[17] The first head of the Peasant Women's Association was herself an adopted daughter-in-law in a family that had sunk to poverty. She worked in the fields at heavy labor, though this was not usual for women. When her husband died, in her 36th year, she had her first taste of social freedom. With widowhood came independence. She became an active supporter of the anti-Japanese village government, an opera fan and the only female member of the village music club. She even took up smoking in public. When the Peasant Women's Association formed, she "found herself pushed to the fore by the rather shy and timid members of the new organization because she was one of the few poor women who never feared to speak her mind."[18]

The outstanding woman cadre of a village two miles from where the Crooks did their original study was separated even earlier in life from male authority. Her father died before she was born. She and her mother were thrown on their own resources, living as fuel gatherers and doing coolie labor. She was married at 15, but soon abandoned. At 17 years of age, she was completely on her own. Contacted as a representative of the poorest peasants by a communist cadre, she sheltered her for two years, aided the anti-Japanese guerrilla forces and at 24 became a party member herself. The following year (1944) she was elected a labor heroine and head of her village's women's association. When her husband finally returned to the community, well after Liberation, she was already firmly established as a cadre, heading the first mutual aid group in the village and later the first lower-level Agricultural Producer's Cooperative.[19]

Moreover, as the Crooks indicate, the initial members of the Peasant Women's Association were recruited from among the poorest in the village. They were those who had suffered the most both from class oppression and male oppression. Some had been forced into prostitution. Others had been abandoned without any means of livelihood and either forced to find their own way or to take temporary husbands. Some were runaways from cruel husbands or unbearable household circumstances. Generally they were seen as "disreputable" women by the middle peasants, including middle peasant women who had led more conventional lives.

And there were still others whose lives took them beyond "Confucian morality" and male authority. C. K. Yang cites the case of the woman representative who in the old society was a "female sorcerer." She was a poor peasant woman who made a living through shamanistic seances in the old days. After Liberation she developed into an articulate and politically sophisticated cadre. Her earlier skills in human relations and her verbal abilities, Yang suggests, were invaluable assets. So was her class background, and even more so, her marginal position since "unlike economically more fortunate women, she had apparently not had a man to speak for her and thus had overcome *before* the revolution one of the traditional patterns of 'proper' behavior that restrained women from direct action."[20] In short, she was not tied into the kinship system through marriage ties, and had been forced for survival to create a position of influence for herself—in this case one where backing by supernatural authority would override male authority.

My own limited interviewing elicited a high percentage of similar life experiences. In Shashihyu Brigade, Tsunghwa County, the leading woman cadre and head of the women's association was a former adopted daughter-in-law who remained in the community after marriage. The leader of the crack women's work group of "Iron Wives" was village-born and had married within the village to another cadre. In Hsuhang Commune, near Shanghai, the leading woman cadre at the commune level was locally born and had relocated back in her native village with her husband after many years of working in city industry. A second of the women's leaders was a former adopted daughter-in-law who at the time of Liberation demanded the right to free choice in marriage, in this case to a young man living in the hamlet where she had been raised. Adopted daughters-in-law as cadres and activists in the over-40 age group also turned up at Ch'i-li-ying in Honan and elsewhere, as did women who had essentially made matrilocal marriages.

There are obvious advantages to being able to stay in one's home community after marriage, but it is still unusual for women to do so unless they are married to someone in the People's Liberation Army or to a worker in a nearby city or county town. However, in the current birth-control campaigns families are being urged to have no more than three children, and to think about bringing in a son-in-law if all three should turn out to be girls. Joining your wife's residence no longer carries the stigma it did in the past, when it was an unfilial act that only the poorest men would agree to. Resettlement of educated youths in the countryside also widens the marriage pool and makes it possible for young women to remain in their home communities.

The adoption of child brides stopped at Liberation, as well it should, but in some areas it has had negative effects on recruitment of women cadres in the younger generation of

women. In some teams in Hsuhang almost 70% of the women over 40 had been adopted as small children, and in overall terms women's participation in political life was high (25% of the commune party committee, 30% of the commune revolutionary committee and with women leaders not only of all-women work teams, but also of some mixed work teams, and one woman brigade leader). Yet there was concern about the absence of upcoming new cadres among the younger women. The teams, many of which were dominated by one surname group, were less willing to educate and train their own daughters. Brides were selected from outside the team, and often from outside the commune. Like departing daughters, the new brides lacked training and experience. They were also under pressure to produce sons during the early years of marriage. They were not in the work force full time for several years (although in this commune women were 55% of the agricultural work force and 40% of the industrial work force). When their children all reached school age, these women were still ineligible for responsible posts because of their broken work records, their lesser participation in political work, their lack of experience and their lack of special skills. When I visited, the women cadres were grappling with the problem of how to recruit new leadership from out of this younger group.

These features do not obviate the need to look at the problem in terms of ideology and the retention of traditional ways of thinking about women. The long legacy of second-class status is not that easily obliterated. In many areas, women are excused or even barred from doing agricultural work during menses: the reason given is that it would be detrimental to their health, but the underlying reason is that in traditional thinking menstruating women were polluting and would affect the crops. This kind of thinking is still being struggled against.

The evaluation of the work that women do also reflects older thinking. Housework, for example, continues to go unrewarded and defined as "non-work." There is no payment for food preparation, cooking, child care, laundry, or clothing production unless it is done outside of the home in a team or brigade workshop. Moreover, these tasks are seen as women's responsibilities, particularly in the countryside, although not exclusively. A recent article in the *Kuang-ming Daily* reflects the ambivalence toward sharing of household tasks:

> *. . . due to the influence of feudalism and capitalism, there are still persons who tend to look down upon and discriminate against women. This has been reflected in many of their activities. Some of them merely pay lip service to the role of women who must shoulder half of the worldly responsibilities, while refusing to take any action to bring that role into full play. Others assign women cadres as much housework as possible, as if women are cut out only for household chores which they consider to be outside their own responsibility.*[21]

That last line can only refer to husbands or male household heads, since housework is hardly "assigned" by the team, brigade, factory or office unit. And the article then continues, in a somewhat compromising vein:

> *It is true that after marriage, a woman must spend much of her time and energy on household chores. Yet a revolutionary woman certainly does not allow such chores to cut into her social responsibilities. Men comrades should offer to share a portion [italics mine] of the household chores from the standpoint of equality, to enable the women comrades to participate properly in socialist revolution and socialist construction.*[22]

In short, household chores remain women's responsibility· men may choose to "help her with her work," but if they do not, the woman must still manage to find time to engage in political activity and productive labor. It's a big step forward from saying women's place is in the home or that men have no responsibility for the management of the household, but it's still a long way from egalitarianism. In many households, the young wife's source of help is an older woman whose age and state of health preclude her participation in productive labor. This transfer has changed the daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationship considerably, but it does not change the relationship between men and women or improve the status of women.

Just as household tasks continue to be sex-linked, productive labor may continue to be assigned by sex. Throughout the work force there are now women doing jobs that were once thought of as men's work. Some are exceptional cases such as women aviators and high-tension power line operators who stand as symbols for the promise that "anything male comrades can do, women comrades can do." In the countryside, many jobs exclude women. To some degree this is necessary for the protection of pregnant women or for the convenience of those who are breast-feeding or for older women whose feet were bound. But women are pregnant or breast-feeding for a relatively short span of years, and sometimes the division of labor by sex seems arbitrary and blind to individual abilities and capacities.

A case in point is the report of an investigating team of the county revolutionary committee in Ch'i-tung county, Kiangsu.[23] The team investigated a fishing village where 85% of the agricultural work force were women—few or none were engaged in fishing. Tasks like soil loosening, weeding, fruit picking and cotton trimming were assigned to women. Other tasks were regarded as only suitable for men:

> *Some women have high enthusiasm and demand farm jobs which are beyond their capacity, and they are urged to think of the long-range interests and work realistically within their capacity.*[24]

The article goes on to approve the example of a hard-working woman who was permanently removed from agricultural work and assigned to be an attendant in the creche after having an operation, and to explain that pregnant, lactating and menstruating women were all excluded from transplanting work. Men were excluded from other things: "domestic work should be shared by men and women but some household chores, such as looking after children, sewing, etc., should generally be done by women."

In some places, women have been insistent that they have the same capacities as men, or at least some of them do. There are teams of "Iron Girls" or "Iron Wives" which do heavy and difficult work or all phases of agricultural work and often take on more than the normal quota to prove their point. It seems to be easier to prove that in the northern areas where women did little agricultural work prior to Liberation. Their relatively recent entry into the work force doing "men's work" has raised their consciousness and that of the men as

well. But in areas where some agricultural jobs were traditionally done by women, agricultural labor is more sex typed and not always given equal payment.

Productive labor is rewarded by work points which are converted into cash paid to the individual. There is a guiding principle of equal pay for equal work and some overlap between the pay of men and women. But often, women are still seen as being less productive and efficient in the same job. They work a shorter labor day in order to meet domestic responsibilities, and lose several work days a month during menses, which further reduces their income. And women's work groups often do tasks which receive a lower evaluation in terms of effort or skills required. These tend to be jobs done by women before Liberation.

At Holo Brigade, near Wuxi, yearly income for women falls between $280 RMB and $360 RMB. Men's income ranges between $480 and $520. This reflects shorter work days, fewer work days per month, and sex-assigned tasks. The highest earners in the brigade are those in male workgroups raising pond fish and cultivating pearls. Both men and women work in grain production teams, but women work only 25 days of the month and receive lower work points for what they can do. In the brigade-run embroidery shop, the women workers' points and earnings are determined not by the market value of what the shop produces, but what their husband or father's team accords them—these women earn between 6½ and 9 points a day, but never a full 10.

Impressionistically, it seems that where women continue to do the same productive jobs they did before Liberation, the demand for equal pay is less easily won. The value of women's work was adjudged long ago. An extreme example of this occurs in the tea brigades near Hangchow. The major income of the community stems from women's labor. Tea accounts for 90% of brigade income, with women engaged in tea picking eight months of the year and also doing most of the processing. Men work in forestry and rice production, which accounts for most of the remaining 10%. Yet a man's work day is given 10 points, while a woman's is worth 8. Accounting is done at the brigade level rather than at the level of the production team as is still the rule elsewhere. Since work points are unequal, almost every man in the brigade receives a higher cash income than any woman. If accounting were done at the team level, the all-women tea teams would be earning anywhere from eight to nine times more than the men. With accounting at the brigade level, income could still be equal if women received the same number of work points. Instead, males, as a group, receive the difference between the wages of the actual producers and the market value of the item produced. I was told that this system followed the Tachai model: in form yes, by accounting at the brigade level and thus equalizing team incomes, but in spirit, no. And one wonders whether the system would be so enthusiastically followed if the men's work produced a markedly more valuable product. Certainly that was not the case in our earlier example of the Holo Brigade.

Of course, this is not an economic rip-off, as in the days when the landlord pocketed the difference between the market price of tea and the meager wages of his women day workers. It all becomes household income now, shared with spouse, children and aged parents. But it's a political rip-off: despite their importance in production and being 51% of the work force, women are only 27% of the cadres in the brigade and commune committees, 40% of the leaders and specialists at the small team levels.

However, the various failures to achieve total equality do not cancel out the tremendous progress that has been made. Chinese women, prior to Liberation, were victims of the most terrible kinds of oppression. They had no access to economic independence, education, or political leadership whatsoever. Today they come close to being half the work force. Even though they participate politically in lesser numbers than the ideal, it is a tremendous leap forward from their total powerlessness in traditional society. They have come a long way since 1949, and we should look at the recent developments which may serve to realize the goal of sex equality more completely.

One such development is the encouragement to move up to the brigade level of accounting, coupled with equalization of work points for all tasks (as in Tachai). This potentially assures women of an equal income. In addition, the move to the brigade as the major social unit beyond the household could lead to more rationalized decision-making about education and training of women for leadership. In multi-surname villages, a young woman may have to leave her parental team at marriage, but she will not always be leaving the brigade. The growth of commune industry, and commune or brigade-sponsored work groups similarly take decisions about women out of the hands of the localized lineage.

A second development is the relocation of educated youths in the countryside. Some of these are permanent assignments, bringing in potential marriage partners. The educated young women are unlikely to accept a traditional role and will serve also to spur people into reconsidering their expectations for their own daughters. And if the educated young men marry into the community, their wives will have more status and leverage than if they were coming as strangers into a new place.

Thirdly, there are the stirrings in the newly revived women's associations, which were disbanded during the Cultural Revolution. Starting in 1972, they were reorganized and quickly became involved in educational projects, family planning, encouragement of women into production and concern for the special needs of women. Starting in the summer of 1973, women's congresses were held at the county, regional and municipal levels, and by late summer were beginning to convene at the provincial level.[25] The provincial congresses, each of which met for five or six days, dealt with such issues as implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work, labor protection for women, sharing of housework, planned parenthood, encouragement of late marriage, greater participation of women in production, increasing the number of women cadres and bringing women into the party and the Young Communist League, attention to the special problems of educated young women resettling in the countryside, and criticism and struggle against the forces of old ideas and habits reflecting male chauvinist thinking. Press reports available here unfortunately did not detail the resolutions that came out of these meetings, but one from the Hainan Administrative Region is perhaps indicative: "There must be women party members in each brigade by the end of this year and in each production team by the end of June next year."[26]

Also encouraging is the fusion of the woman question with the campaign to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius. Direct

linkages still seem to be limited to the writings of women cadres and women's collectives, but they have been very much in evidence in the press since the onset of the mass movement. Since at least early January 1974, Lin Piao has been targeted as a spokesman and symbol for male chauvinist thinking. He has been charged with slandering women as being "backward in thought and ideas,"[27] and with having said such things as "a woman cannot be expected to have a bright future,"[28] "a woman's future is determined by that of her husband," and "a woman must devote herself to her husband." He is accused of having urged a return to "loyalty, filial piety, chastity and righteousness"[29] in order to once again bind women with "reactionary, feudal ethics." He is also said to have stated that women "think only about how to get oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and firewood."[30] All of these attacks on mistaken ideas about women are, of course, part of a larger criticism of worship of the past and the desire to restore capitalism or even aspects of feudalism. The women's movement is strengthened by being part of that wider criticism.

Also encouraging, but more muted in the anti-Confucian campaign, are the attacks on clan loyalties over class unity. Several articles have appeared discussing the experiences in the brigades in Chufu county, Shantung, which is the home of the K'ung lineage, the descendants of Confucius.[31] Pointing to the problems of landlordism and exploitation in the old society which involved those of the same surname and to the class struggle that continued after Liberation, the message of the articles is that "those of the same class are dear, not those of the same clan" and that historical experience proves the hypocrisy of the Confucian principles of "jen" and "I."

Class awareness versus clan loyalties appears in another context, which praises women's political astuteness. In one such article[32] the director of the commune women's association was singled out for commendation because when an unreformed landlord in her production brigade

> .. *used clan relations to corrode a cadre, she aroused* the masses of women *[emphasis mine] to struggle against him. She mobilized an elderly woman who had worked as a servant for the landlord in the old society to pour out her grievances and expose his crimes. This helped raise the women's consciousness of class struggle.*

And who is better suited to do this than the women, who are outsiders to the male solidary group and have no special interest in protecting clan privilege?

Merged also into the anti-Confucius campaign is discussion of the underlay of traditional religious beliefs which defined women as polluting agents either in agriculture or in the fishing industry.[33] The old taboos are criticized as a part of the doctrine of "male superiority," linked to Confucian thought even if not discussed in the Confucian classics.

At the same time, there is still reluctance within the anti-Confucian campaign to separate the issue of oppression of women as women from the question of class struggle. In many, though by no means all, of the articles, Confucian ideas are said to have oppressed the "working women" *(lao-dung-fu-nu)* rather than women in general.

> *For over two thousand years until liberation, the working women were subjected to oppression by the reactionary political authority, clan authority, religious authority and the authority of the husband and downtrodden at the lowest stratum of society.... The establishment of the socialist system in China has eliminated the class cause of oppression and exploitation of working women and liberated the masses of women politically, economically and culturally.*[34]

Undeniably, working women suffered the most: their oppression as women was an added element to their oppression as peasants and workers, to their oppression as youth in a gerontocracy. But one could argue that all women shared some of the same oppression because of the value assigned to gender. The oppression stemming from clan authority, religious authority and the authority of the husband touched the lives of all but an exceptional handful. There were few Empress Dowagers through the two thousand years of history.

There are still other developments which are of positive value in raising the status of women. Birth control methods are being actively promoted and increasingly adopted, thus giving women control over their own bodies and providing alternatives to motherhood as women's only or major role. Child care facilities are expanding. And finally, there is the sincere concern with the problem of training and promoting more women cadres. The December 1973 issue of *Hung-ch'i* contained an article specifically on the need to train and recruit more women cadres and bring them into the party. The same month an article in the *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao* on training of new cadres in Linhsi county, Hopei, pointed out that since the Ninth Party Congress half of the cadres promoted to commune and county posts have been women, and that at the production brigade and team levels, 37% of the cadres are women.[35] Similarly, we might assume that the campaign in Hsinfang County, Kwantung, is not an isolated case: there, over the past two years, some 209 women went through special training classes preparing them for positions at the commune and county levels, while another 3,720 attended commune-sponsored classes to enable them to move into lower-level posts.[36] Some of the educated youth resettled in the area were drawn into the educational work with women, particularly literacy classes to bring them up to the level where they could become involved in ideological study.

There is also sharp protest in the press when local situations are markedly out of line with government policy. Recently there was a letter in the *Kuang-Ming Daily* strongly criticizing the school system in the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region.[37] The writer complained that in his/her commune only 12% of the teachers were women, none of whom were allowed to hold any positions of responsibility. Within the county, where women were between 20% and 30% of the teachers, only one had been given a responsible post as deputy director of the Revolutionary Leadership Group in a brigade primary school. The letter concluded by strongly urging more women representation and investigation of the situation by responsible persons.

Looking at the overall situation some 25 years since Liberation, there is still cause for optimism. Although the changes have not been as far-reaching as one might have hoped, they are considerable, and recent developments are encouraging. The anti-Confucius movement is very complex and deals with a number of issues. The scholarly polemics on the Spring and Autumn Period, on the nature of slave society and the rise of feudalism, and on the meaning of Confucian terms and phrases are but one part of it. To the anthropolo-

gist's eye, there is more importance to the meetings and discussions going on in the countryside and urban neighborhoods and work places. The past is not being discussed for its own sake, but because of its relevance to contemporary life, in this case its negative effects on the current scene. In relating this discussion to their own lives and experiences, it is conceivable that people's consciousness will be raised and further changes will occur. Some of those changes will have to be structural ones. Consciousness alone does not resolve the problem of realizing full equality for women, just as years of exposure to the concept of class struggle has not always led to success in breaking down the insularity of kinship groups and expanding the size of the cooperating group. There are still backward communes, like the one I visited near Canton, where almost each team represented a single surname group, each clearly separated from the other in residence clusters, guarding its own resources and hesitant to pool some of their wealth into brigade projects and enterprises. The revolution is not yet completed, but one can hope that it will continue to move along the right path, breaking down the last vestiges of privilege and inherited power and doing away with outmoded social structures and ideas whose origins go back to tribal society.

## Notes

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the meetings of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, Nov. 29-Dec. 1, 1973 and at a CCAS panel in Boston in early April 1974. For their criticisms and suggestions during the development of this paper I would like to extend thanks to Delia Davin, Irene Eber, Gayle Rubin, Brooke Grundfest Shoepf, and Marilyn Young.

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3 Nancy Milton, "A Response to 'Women and Revolution,'" reprinted in Young, ed, *Women in China*, 179-192

4. Soong Ching-ling, 'Women's Liberation,' reprinted in M Young, ed, *Women in China*, 201-209.

5 Fu Wen, 'Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius—The Shackle that Keeps Women in Bondage," *Peking Review*, Vol. 17, No 10 (March 8, 1974) 16-18, Hsu Kwang, 'Women's Liberation is a Component Part of the Proletarian Revolution," *Peking Review* same issue, 12-15

6 Isabel and David Crook, *The First Years of Yangyi Commune* (London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) 242

7. Teng Ying-chao, "Tudi Gaige yu Funu Gongzuoti Xin Renwu," in *Funu Yundong Wenxian* (Hong Kong: Xinminju Publishers, June 1949), 40-46.

8 Crook, 241.

9. John Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 236-238.

10 Lewis, 238.

11 Jan Myrdal *Report from a Chinese Village* (New York: Pantheon 1965)

12 Li Kai and Ching Shen, 'The Road for Five Hundred Million Peasants," reprinted in *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*, Mao Tse-tung, ed. (Peking. Foreign Languages Press, 1957), 115-127.

13. Ibid., 120

14. Party Branch, NanWang Village Production Brigade, Anping County, Hopei, "Lienxi Luxian Doujeng· Shiji Pi Lin Pi Kung," *Hung-ch'i* (March 1974), 45-47.

15. Ting Chung, "Repair of Temples and Preservation of Cultural Objects,"*Southern Daily* (Canton), May 3, 1962, reprinted in Ralph Crozier, *China's Cultural Legacy and Communism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 48-49.

16. David and Isabel Crook, *Revolution in a Chinese Village: Ten-Mile Inn* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 43.

17. Ibid., 73.

18. Ibid, 106.

19. Crook, 1966, 16-19.

20. C. K. Yang, *The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution* (Cambridge The Technology Press, 1959), 132.

21. Lu Yuan, "Hail to Them for Shouldering Half of the Worldly Responsibilities," *Kuang-ming Daily*, July 8, 1973. Translated in *Daily Report, People's Republic of China*, Vol. I, No. 180, August 3, 1973.

22. Ibid.

23. Investigating Team of the County Revolutionary Committee, Ch'i-tung county, Kiangsu, "Bring into Fuller Play the Role of Women as a Labor Force," *Hung-ch'i* March 1973. Translated in *Survey of China Mainland Magazines* 1974-3, 51-54.

24. Ibid.

25. It is improbable that the Chinese press and radio did not give more detail about the resolutions and speeches at these congresses. Our various government-sponsored monitoring services did not find the subject very important. *Daily Report*, for example, confined its efforts to translating only the speeches given by the high-ranking invited male guest at each opening session. One such appeared under the incredible lead line composed by some piglet at DR. "XXX Lauds Distaff Role." Fortunately, he had done no such thing! And although the *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao* literally devoted pages to articles by, for, and about women during the first two weeks of March, the *Survey of the China Mainland Press* seems to have regarded them as just so many blank pages. Anyway, according to the radio monitoring done by *Daily Report*, from mid-July to the beginning of the 10th Party Congress in late August, women's congresses were held in Kwangtung, Fukien, Kansu, Heilungkiang, Tibet, the Kwangsi-Chuang Autonomous region, Chekiang, Szechuan, Yunnan, Shensi, Liaoning, Kiangsu, Kiangsi and various regions of Sinkiang. All of these made some linkage between Liu Shao-chi and the persistance of old ideas about women. After the 10th Party Congress, there were meetings in Shanghai and Peking, Honan, Hunan, Kweichow, Hainan and Inner Mongolia. I was not able to find reports for the remaining provinces. These later meetings added criticism of Lin Piao and study of the 10th Party Congress documents to the discussion agendas.

26. *Daily Report*, Vol. I, No. 202, October 18, 1973.

27. "Women Can Prop Up Half of Heaven," *Kuang-ming-jih-pao*, Jan. 14, 1974.

28 Fu Wen, op. cit.

29. "Tachai Women Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius," New China News Agency English release, Peking, March 8, 1974.

30. "Woman Oil Tender Goes to College," NCNA English release, Peking, March 12, 1974.

31. "Former Tenants of Confucius Descendants Denounce Lin Piao, Confucius," NCNA English release, Peking January 31, 1974, see also *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao*, March 1, 1974.

32. "Central China Region Actively Trains Women Cadres," NCNA English release, Changsha, March 7, 1974.

33. "East China Peasant Women Criticize Lin Piao, Confucius," NCNA English release Nanking: Feb. 27, 1974, "Chinese Fisherwomen Criticize Lin Piao's Contempt for Women Notions as Reactionary," NCNA English release, Shenyang: March 11, 1974, see also an interview with an all-woman fishing team in Shantung, NCNA English release, Tsinan: March 10, 1974.

34. *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao* editorial for International Women's Day, NCNA English release, Peking: March 8, 1974. See also "Women Alternate Members of Party Central Committee Criticize Lin Piao, Confucius," NCNA English release, Peking: February 22, 1974.

35. Reporting Unit, Linhsi Hsien Revolutionary Committee, "Training of New Cadres," *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao*, Dec. 12, 1973. Translated in SCMP, Jan. 9, 1974. It is worth noting that all three of the cases given of new cadres were women.

36. CCP Committee of Hsinfeng County, Kwangtung, "Actively Help Women Cadres Improve Their Leadership," *Ren-Min-Ri-Bao*, October 9, 1973. Translated in *Daily Report*, Vol. I, No. 214, November 6, 1973.

37. *Kuang-Ming Daily*, September 21, 1973. Translated in *Daily Report*, Vol. I, No 203, October 19, 1973.

# Social Revolution and Woman's Emancipation: China During the Great Leap Forward

by Phyllis Andors

The problem of the relationship between social change and the role of women in society is of relatively recent emphasis. Where the problem has been analyzed in the past, serious ambiguities remain. Western liberal political theory has curiously been silent on the "woman question," even though there is general agreement that the process of industrialization effects changes in the traditional patterns of the division of labor, one of which is the sexual division of labor that exists in every society.[1] Even where it is acknowledged that economical development and cultural change have historically called upon women to fulfill roles outside the traditional maternal, home and family-centered ones, it is generally assumed that such roles will be passing phases or atypical patterns for an individual female life, since the existence of the family with functions as childrearer and provider of services is never clearly questioned.[2] Liberal theory has a view of female liberation completely compatible with the institutions of bourgeois society, and has never seriously confronted the implications of what female equality would entail for the family as an institution. Thus, it is able to accept the idea of women as individuals participating in the marketplace but is not able to comprehend women as a group being the equal of men as a group.

If liberal theory has not been able to deal adequately with the "woman question," neither has Marxist theory even though the goal of sexual equality was stated in ways that went beyond the individual implications of home and marketplace. Although Marx generally held that the bourgeois family was not a universal and permanent part of human existence but was linked to the functioning system of capitalist social and economic institutions, Marxists generally, and one might add, optimistically, felt that female liberation would be a natural result of social revolution based on class struggle. Marx himself was slightly more ambiguous on this point than his later followers would indicate. He clearly recognized the importance of biological differences in the structure of human society, including the difference between the sexes (referred to as the division of labor for the purpose of reproduction). But the man-woman question remained peripheral to Marx's concerns. He generally felt that women would achieve equality and liberation only as a classless society was achieved.

The radical feminists, like the Marxists, see class society and the oppression of women as related, but their notion of the relationship is reversed, whereas Marxists view sex oppression as a contributing factor to class oppression, radical feminists view class oppression as a contributing factor to sex oppression.

The Chinese experience offers a unique vantage point from which to view the relationship between women's liberation, socialist revolution and "modernization," a relationship so differently interpreted by the theories available. Although the Chinese have never acknowledged any conflict between women's liberation and devleopment strategies which are to lead China to a socialist society,[3] their experience clearly indicates that such contradictions do exist. However, it was not until the Great Leap Forward that one could see this conflict in clear ways. Prior to the Great Leap, campaigns, which in effect had a dramatic impact on the status of women, were not undertaken primarily for that purpose. Even the Marriage Law campaign, as shattering as it was to the traditional family structure which was so central a part of the old society, was seen, like land reform, as part of the class struggle and not simply a woman's question.

The Great Leap Forward, envisioned as a rapid means to build socialism in China by mobilizing masses of people, including millions of women, brought out the relationship between revolution and women's liberation in a way unprecedented in Chinese or world history. Western patterns of industrialization and technological change have precluded mass recruitment of women into the labor force until the level of technological development could introduce labor-saving devices for home use that freed some women from some of the burdens of household tasks. The Chinese have sought to emancipate women from traditional roles long before the use of labor-saving devices in the home. In a mammoth effort of politically induced social change which encouraged—even demanded—that women enter into production and engage in political activities, the Great Leap called into question the

traditional institutions and historically given roles in the division of labor. Many of the tasks which kept women bound to the home were collectivized and have become an integral part of Chinese society in many places. The rearing of children, cooking, washing, and managing of finances have become extra-family collectivized activities, yet the nuclear family has been formally preserved.

The Great Leap Forward policy toward women was a logical outgrowth of the mass mobilization of human labor which was at the bottom of this development strategy. It represented a change in actual policy toward women in China, in terms of development strategy and in terms of woman's role in Chinese society compared to the pre-Leap period. For those in the Chinese leadership who were concerned about the problems of an increasingly impersonal and unresponsive bureaucratic system, the growing disparities in living conditions between urban and rural areas and the inability of the agricultural system to achieve significant breakthroughs in levels of production under conditions of low capital investment and lack of mechanization, women were to be a political resource in the development of Great Leap policies. The mass mobilization of women for participation in economic production was viewed as one way to create additional alternatives for increasing production in both agriculture and industry. In this way, woman's labor was a substitute for capital investment. "Women substituting for men" freed men to undertake new projects, i.e., development of rural industry and concentration on more complicated and advanced technology. Politically and socially, Great Leap policies were an attempt to assimilate a low status, traditionally oppressed social group into key areas of national life. Through a process of participation and struggle women were to contribute to China's rapid modernization and they were also to achieve equality, thus fulfilling the commitment of the Chinese Communists to the goals of woman's emancipation.

However, just as the Great Leap addressed itself in a meaningful way to the crucial problems of economic development mentioned above, it created a whole new set of problems. The very mobilization of women called into question traditional roles and institutions in ways that created resistance and hence threatened the progress of economic development from other directions. The Great Leap thus raised the issue of special interests for women in an unavoidable way.

## The Pre-Leap Period

In spite of the fact that before the Great Leap many women engaged in agricultural work, joined the industrial work force, entered educational institutions and were even elected to positions of national leadership, the overall percentage of women engaged in these activities was infinitely smaller than that of their male counterparts. The predominant role for women was still as the traditional housewife and mother. One reason for this was the inability of the economy to provide employment for women.[4] In 1954 *Hsin Chung-kuo fu-nu*, the official publication of the All-China Federation of Democratic Women (ACFDW), printed a series of articles titled "How Can Housewives Serve Socialism." The theme was that even if women were unable to hold jobs they could feel a sense of participation in national construction. There was a relationship between doing a good job at housework and contributing to socialist construction.[5] By 1956, the Women's Federation had mounted a "Five Goods" *(Wu-hao)* campaign to illustrate how housewives could support socialist construction. The campaign, it seems, was directed solely at housewives[6] who were urged to:

1. Unite with neighborhood families for mutual aid
2. Do housework well
3. Educate children well
4. Encourage family in production, study and work
5. Study well themselves

In a thoroughly traditional way, and with the not unimportant exceptions already noted, it is clear that the Chinese considered household tasks and the rearing of children to be women's special responsibilities. Women were seen as dependents of workers whose main task was to arrange homelife well so males could devote proper energy to the job.

Prior to the Great Leap, the emphasis placed on heavy industry at the expense of agriculture and light industry militated against the recruitment of large numbers of women into production. Many jobs in heavy industry demanded certain skills that women, as an historically disadvantaged group educationally, largely lacked. Since light industry, a traditional absorber of semi-skilled and unskilled labor, was not an investment priority, women workers, other than those entering the traditional female labor-oriented industries of textiles and tobacco, were largely excluded from employment opportunities opened during the First Five Year Plan. There were relatively few educated women, most of whom were foreign-trained prior to 1949, and a very small number of women trained as engineers, technicians, etc. The urban-heavy industry orientation of this period did provide greater opportunities for urban women to escape traditional roles, if not traditional attitudes.[7] Medical facilities, educational institutions, and childcare facilities (many large factories employing women, especially textile firms, established nurseries and maternity rooms) though small in numbers were almost exclusively found in the cities.[8]

The main institutional development in urban areas affecting women was the establishment of urban resident committees.[9] These were the lowest level of administrative state power and were staffed, in the main, by housewives. They were responsible for health work, sanitation, keeping the peace, organizing the masses during national campaigns, etc. They were important in two ways: they gave women experience in local politics and made them familiar with neighborhood problems, needs and resources; and they later became the basis for the development of the urban communes.[10]

The Chinese countryside is the repository of tradition and conservatism, and Chinese peasant women during the 1950s had minimal contact with the modern sector. But attempts at mobilizing women peasants for economic production did not wait for the Great Leap. The collectivization movement of 1955-56[11] stressed the impor-

tance of female participation in agricultural production. With the development of the Agricultural Producers Cooperatives (APC), the traditional work patterns could be transformed and projects unthinkable before were now possible, for example, large-scale irrigation works. On the one hand, it held the promise of emancipation, as a *Ren-min Ri-bao* (RMRB) editorial quoting Engels said: "The first requisite for the emancipation of women is that all women participate again in social labor; to achieve this, individual families are required to be no longer the units of the social economy"[12]; or, in terms of economic independence from the family: husbands would no longer be able to say "I take care of all your needs' *(wo bai yang huo le ni)* [13] But alongside this emphasis on participation in agricultural production was another which virtually made it an obligation for women to shoulder two burdens. The *People's Daily* certainly stated the case:

> *Participation in agricultural production is the inherent right and duty of rural women. Giving birth to children and raising them as well as preoccupation with household chores are also the obligation of rural women.* These things set women apart from men.[14] [Emphasis added]

Since there was little room in rural policy to provide facilities by which household tasks could be managed outside the traditional family, women were urged to participate in production where their labor was undoubtedly necessary, but they still had to manage traditional "women's work." In case anyone felt burdened by this, the *People's Daily* editorial went on to assure women that "While farm production is the principle form of labor in the countryside, good housekeeping and proper care of children is also labor of social significance."[15]

Perhaps housework was "labor of social significance" but the fact was that there were no labor points accorded it, and hence it had a lower value in the eyes of both the community and the women who did it While women were urged to do their double share of contributing to socialist construction, the Women's Federation was appealing to women to translate their economic power into political power.

> *Women's federations must assist the cooperatives in training women backbone elements so that a woman director or deputy director is appointed in every cooperative and a woman chief or deputy chief is found in every production squad. Women members, women deputy chiefs, women technicians and women bookkeepers should be increased and promoted every year in the management committees and control committees of the cooperatives.*[16]

Some women did emerge in positions of leadership[17] at the local level, but there were no national directives issued to reinforce the Women's Federation appeal to develop women leaders; and while women assumed responsible cooperative positions it appears that most of these positions were related to women's work, i.e., organizing women for labor, dealing with special women's problems, being a spokesman for women. On the eve of the Great Leap, over 100 million women were members of the Agricultural Producers Cooperatives (APCs).[18] The advantages of women's participation were evident in increased harvests and the development of subsidiary production such as raising pigs and chickens and increasing vegetable production. Yet the confines of tradition limited this participation by placing a double burden on those women who were anxious to participate in life outside the home.

## The Great Leap Forward in Rural Areas

The main purpose of Great Leap Forward policy in both industry and agriculture was to achieve breakthroughs in levels of production given the limitations of technology at the time, low capital investment and lack of mechanization in the agricultural sector. Radical reorganization of the labor force (real and potential), the one factor of production thought to exist in overabundance, was an attempt to obviate the necessity of large-scale capital investment especially in the rural areas. The agricultural producer cooperative movement had illustrated the potentiality of collectivization for undertaking large-scale irrigation projects, building of dams, etc. and was now viewed as the means to introduce the development of rural industry. Certain irrigation projects had already illustrated the potentiality of larger collective units than the APCs.

As the high tide of agricultural collectivization swept the countryside in 1956-57 it merged into the communization current of the Great Leap. While the issue of women's emancipation did not constitute a major focus of GLF policy, the labor power of women was a major target of mass mobilization Mao had pointed to the necessity of women being mobilized for production in his 1955 speech, "The Socialist Hightide in the Countryside."

> *In the case of many localities where production scope has expanded, operating departments multiplied, labor scope extending toward nature broadened, and work more meticulously done, labor forces will become insufficient This situation is still only beginning and will develop year after year in the future. . . Women of China constitute a great source of manpower. This source must be tapped*[19]

The Great Leap's mobilization of women differs from previous attempts to urge female participation in labor in two distinct ways. First, it was on a much larger scale, an attempt to involve some 300,000,000 women. Secondly, it was to be accomplished under new institutional arrangements—the communes—which could absorb and utilize their labor.

Initially, women were to substitute for men in main agricultural production.

> *In many areas where the men-folk departed to take part in building large water conservancy projects, women took over most of the productive tasks such as manure accumulation, field management, building of small irrigation facilities, afforestation and sideline production.*[20]

Such participation in the early phases of the Great Leap in 1958 met with significant opposition. Traditional superstitions were cited to oppose women doing work outside the home: "If women go to fields it won't rain" and "If women go to sea the boats will overturn."[21] Families were often reluctant to have their women go into the fields. In many cases it was considered improper work, especially because of the contact with males outside of the family that it would bring, and because it was deemed ill-suited to women's capabilities. Grandmothers who would necessarily be forced to shoulder a greater burden in the home and care of the children, and who

had reached the age where they traditionally gave up much of the household responsibilities, were in opposition to the policy. The Women's Federation mounted an intensive campaign to explain the benefits to the entire family of working women.[22] But opposition from traditional sources was not the only problem. With the entry of large numbers of women into agricultural production, the establishment of collectivized services such as mess halls, childcare facilities, and other welfare services that would free women for labor outside the home became necessary. Temporary mess halls, nurseries, and kindergartens had been used previously in peak seasons but were now necessary as permanent institutions if women were to work on a regular basis.

The pace of communization was very rapid as province after province reported its success. The central China province of Honan emerged as a leader in the new movement. In the space of little more than six months, the rapid pace of change meant that suddenly "6,000,000 women in the province were thus emancipated from domestic labor."[23] By 1960, institutions to accommodate to this change had been formed, and the effect of women's more public role was being felt in priorities of social policy. Honanese women had access to 100,000 maternity centers in the province and were allowed 45 days maternity leave. Spare-time schools had enrolled 2.7 million and there were 180,000 women serving as chairman, vice-chairman, brigade or deputy brigade leaders.[24] The emergence of women in these positions of leadership would suggest the ability of women to translate their economic power into political power.

The intensive efforts to mobilize women were at first largely successful. In 1958 women accounted for 50% of the labor force in agriculture, and in certain areas—where men were being used in industrial projects—this went as high as 70-80%.[25] The majority of women were engaged in field work or related jobs such as manure accumulation. Those women whose "household burden" was especially great were encouraged to engage in subsidiary production near the home. This usually entailed raising pigs, chickens and ducks and/or tending vegetable gardens. However, teams of "March 8" (International Woman's Day) women engaged in building dams, dikes and reservoirs and in vast afforestation projects.[26]

The benefits of participation were evident. Large numbers of women were accorded workpoints and thus shared in the distribution of income. The psychological impact of remuneration for labor should not be underestimated, especially as salaried workers were accorded higher status. For the first time women could evaluate their efforts by some other standard than as traditional wife, mother and housekeeper. As has been pointed out,[27] participation by women, even in those jobs considered "women's work,' i.e. canteens, nurseries, maternity clinics, etc. led to increased knowledge of technology. Operating noodle machines, sewing machines, and simple electrical equipment meant the acquisition of knowledge and some basic skills. And in the fields and kitchens this led to certain simple innovations in tools.[28]


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In the rural areas, the women seemed to have achieved some success in accomplishing the goals set by the Women's Federation. Commune leadership positions for females included the director, deputy director, brigade leader, deputy brigade leader, team leader and deputy team leader. Although there are no national statistics to determine what proportion of each level's leadership was female in the Great Leap period, it appeared evident that women were a minority. In those communes where they were deputy director their chief responsibility was women's work and their backgrounds, while "activist," were also in women's work [29] Further, many of the women who did emerge as leaders often were either rather young[30] or were over forty and activists from pre-1949 days.[31] The generation of women too young to participate in the pre-1949 revolutionary activity or too old to have been educated under the Communists was undistinguished in the Great Leap. A whole generation of women thus seemed to be living more or less traditional lives.

In the course of the Great Leap certain contradictions focusing on the role of women became evident. Since the "woman question" was not a central focus of the Great Leap policy, many of the problems that emerged were apparently unforeseen. Although mobilization of female labor power was a goal of the Great Leap policy, this very mobilization dramatically brought up the whole "woman question" as the contradictions between mass mobilization of women for production and the traditional cultural, economic and social roles of women became quickly apparent. The lack of basic institutional and attitudinal change in the pre-Leap and even in the Leap period was not only evident but led to problems that seriously threatened the very policy of mass labor mobilization, a major premise of the Great Leap's development strategy. It turned out that the Great Leap's development strategy and the "woman question" were much more closely related than anyone before had been ready to admit and the question of woman's emancipation seemed to have far more radical implications for Chinese society than many of the other policies that were first experimented with during the Great Leap. The strong opposition to change of women's status and the reluctance by a male-dominated leadership to resolve many of the problems that remained obstacles to woman's full participation, entailed grave consequences for the success of Great Leap development strategy and contributed, in no small part, to the "limited achievements" of the Great Leap.

The most evident illustration of how far-reaching the effects of mobilization of female labor could be was probably in the sphere of health care. The rural agricultural collectivization drives of 1956-57 that developed into the communal system showed the importance of an adequate health care system. To mobilize female labor there had to be a system which provided for the "special needs" of women workers, i.e. maternity facilities, gynecological supplies, birth control, etc. Even prior to the communes there were alarming reports of a "rash of accidents"[32] involving women and children. The Women's Federation, through its principle organ, *Chung-kuo fu-nü* (Women of China), had been stressing the importance of developing adequate health care since agricultural collectivization had begun in 1954. National recognition did not come until the Great Leap graphically illustrated the relationship between health and development, with the matter of female health care an especially significant question.

During the 1950s rudimentary medical knowledge and facilities developed in the course of the health campaigns to eliminate the "four pests" and develop sanitation. However, almost all of the medical schools, institutes and modern hospital facilities were urban-based. The health burdens of the rural areas were largely shouldered by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine. Even the establishment of the communes did not see a transfer of medical personnel and services to the countryside. Individual communes were expected to develop their own health facilities without either financial help from higher administrative levels or recruitment of urban doctors. Under this arrangement traditional doctors staffed the commune medical facilities. Nor was the development of communal health facilities considered a major priority. The failure of this system to provide for the needs of the population is most apparent in the case of women. By 1959 the abuse of female labor was widespread. The Chairman of the Women's Federation of Hopei Province, Lin Hsiao, complained that the special needs of women laborers were largely ignored.[33] The pressures on women to work were enormous and male leaders often assigned pregnant women to heavy labor, did not allow nursing mothers time off to feed their children, assigned menstruating women to work in cold, damp places, etc. These practices too often resulted in injuries to women and children and permanent health damage.

Minister of Health Li Teh-ch'uan, an outspoken proponent of safeguarding women's health, pointed out the underlying problems with regard to providing health measures for women. The resistance to developing an adequate health care system was closely related to both the traditional attitudes toward the role of women, i.e. "you women are a lot of trouble," and the failure to see the relationship between healthy women workers and increased production. Investment funds were scarce and the male leadership tended to view investment in health protection as a threat to successful completion of production quotas. They said, "protecting women s health means not completing production responsibilities."[34] The contradiction assumed larger proportions as the necessity for healthy women workers to carry out Great Leap policies became more urgent. The media concentrated on emphasizing the health problems of women during the "four periods" of menstruation, pregnancy, postpartum and lactation. But the health issue was more complex, relating as it did to the problem of birth and pregnancy, it thus raised the question of the traditional cultural attitude toward the maternal-sexual role of women within the family.

The attempt to implement birth control policy met opposition from several unrelated sectors, yet this clearly was in all ways a special problem of women. The main form of birth control (apart from abstinence) was the pill. However, the Chinese at the time of the Great Leap were unable to produce enough pills to cover the needs of the countryside and moreover could not get them into the rural areas. Even if they had, the widespread resistance to birth control would have largely precluded their use. The traditional cultural emphasis on large families and especially on male children militated against birth control.

Pressures to bear male children and therefore to fight birth control came from several main sources. First of all, most girl children, even if able-bodied workers, usually left the family and village to live with their husbands once they grew

up and married. Secondly, "male work" tended to earn more workpoints than "female work." Thirdly, since women were still responsible for housework, working in collective agriculture would only contribute to her burdens, and even then a son would be able to make a greater potential contribution to the family income than she could. Hence, any rebellion against numerous pregnancies was faced with severe pressures from the family, as well as from a woman herself.

Thus, both economic inequality in terms of workpoint remuneration (based on sex-role division of labor) plus the fact that female labor, which contributes not only to family income but also to collective income, lasted only as long as a girl remained single, were two crucially important obstacles basic to woman's emancipation. In affecting neither very significantly, the Great Leap left untouched major soures of antagonism to female emancipation. To have dealt with these problems would have meant a challenge to such deep-rooted ideas with such close relationship to male self-images as to undoubtedly have aroused the antagonism of male supremacists, and the antagonism of males might have threatened economic development and political stability.

Throughout the Great Leap the Chinese press publicized the efforts of women to contribute to socialist construction. However, traditional attitudes of male supremacy and the limited capabilities of women, combined with the lack of experience and/or education, limited women's participation. This was clealy illustrated by the "skill revolution," a mass campaign during 1959 centered around technical innovation and technical revolution. Campaigns to produce "bumper crop maidens," "women red flag holders," and "women innovators" were organized.[35] Women were urged to develop advanced farming methods. When only 20-30% of women participated the poor results were blamed on the low cultural levels of women, their self-deprecating attitudes *(tzu-bi)*, and the burden of household chores.[36]

The problem of male supremacy surfaced in the allocation of workpoints. Work in the communes was evaluated in terms of complex wage point systems that differed substantially from commune to commune. Maximum for a day's labor was ten points, with the minimum set at three or four. Workpoints could be assigned for the task or for the individual or a combination of the two. Women rarely achieved the maximum, regardless of the task or their ability. Women's struggle to achieve "equal pay for equal work" was complicated by the lack of national guidelines and the authority of commune officials, almost all of whom were male. In some areas certain tasks were designated "women's tasks'—for example, weeding, afforestation, small irrigation projects, and subsidiary production—and were accorded anywhere from three to seven or eight (mostly five or six) workpoints.

This, of course, raises the problem of a new sexual division of labor which, like the old, is both separate and inherently unequal. The national and women's publications printed several articles attempting to counter this development by emphasizing that "Numerous facts gleaned from the big leap forward show that women, particularly those in their youth and prime, can do anything and do it well."[37] But in addition to unequal pay based in sex-role division of labor, there was clear evidence that even where women were doing the same jobs as men, they were receiving fewer workpoints.[38] The commune, with authority over this matter, thus was an important arena of political conflict for women. The existence of a local and well-organized women's federation was a significant element in the ability of rural women to raise the issue of "equal pay for equal work" and achieve a re-evaluation of the workpoint system.[39] Women cadres organized the women first to discuss the problem, then to carry out an investigation, and only then to meet with the commune's (usually male) leadership and eventually call for a mass meeting. When the commune's leadership was faced with both the results of the investigation and statistics on the contribution of women to the overall production, pressure to revise the system was strong. But in some communes the question of workpoint allocation rested with a lower level of collective life, or even with the production team. In these small groups pressures against sexual equality were stronger. If the production team was based on a village and many male members of the womens' families participated, the "equal pay" issue could have had ramifications within the family. From evidence available, it seems that women were more successful in pressing their demands at the brigade and communal levels, where change of their status does not offer a direct challenge to male family members.[40]

One of the arguments raised to oppose allocating women greater numbers of workpoints was the inconsistency of women's labor. A monthly average for women could range anywhere from twelve to twenty-three days depending on the intensity of household burdens. Household tasks were and have remained largely the responsibility of women and they receive no workpoint allocation. The collective institutions that sprang up in the course of the Great Leap to socialize some household work (e.g. messhalls, nurseries, sewing groups) were not part of every commune and even where they existed, problems of efficiency, skill, taste and cost arose. In addition, transfer of food and fuel to messhalls was awkward and difficult given the state of development of means of transport. Other problems relating to a low level of technological development also arose. For example, if peasant households gave up their fuel to the messhalls, what would they use to heat the *k'ang* and provide home heat in the wintertime. Thus, while collectivized services undoubtedly freed women from some of the burdens of running a house, as soon as the economic situation tightened up seriously in 1960-61 these institutions were the first to be abandoned. It was only the woman's organizations that urged the maintenance of the messhalls and childcare facilities. "There are people, however, who fail to see the great role community welfare services play in the emancipation of women, and the women's strong demand for the collective way of doing household chores."[41]

The Great Leap showed just how far the emancipation of women would take rural China, and just how far rural China had to go before technology, institutions and attitudes could accommodate the drastic changes that would be necessary.

While rural communes were organized for the purposes of production breakthrough, with the "woman question" largely peripheral until it showed itself to be crucial, the urban commune movement largely grew from the initiative of women, mostly housewives, for the purpose of production increase. Its accomplishments in terms of production, especially in the considerable development of light industry, were largely unforeseen. Urban communes were often developed around places of work, e.g. a large factory, school or government office, as well as in residential areas. In the

former case, the function of the commune was production, whereas in the latter case servicing local needs and developing cultural and educational institutions took place in addition to production. In either case, the role of women in the urban commune was much larger than in the rural commune and the labor force in the urban organization was overwhelmingly female.

The initial recruitment of women in the cities was related to the "backyard steel movement" and the expansion of heavy industry. Factory managers were interested in recruiting women to take over the basic and simpler tasks, thus freeing men to establish other construction enterprises. The "substitute women for men"[42] *(yi nu t'i nan)* policy was an attempt to resolve an anticipated labor shortage in a rapidly expanding industrial sector. In many cases this policy was aimed at the dependents of the workers in a particular factory. For example, the families of workers in the Shihchingshan Iron and Steel Works organized themselves into units of auxiliary labor.[43] Elsewhere,

> *Because more than 1500 women workers were entrusted with the simpler processing tasks which were carried on outside the factory basis and workers in the factory were assigned to do the important processing jobs, labor production in the Peking Hat Manufactory was raised continually.*[44]

As logical as this policy was in terms of economic development, it did not mean equality for urban women. It brought them into the labor force on a clearly unequal basis. It provided for very limited participation and acquisition of only the most elementary skills. The men who previously performed these tasks were to be trained for the most complex tasks. In other words, the advancement of a large sector of the male labor force depended on the new female role. Both groups advanced in absolute terms, but their relative positions remained largely the same.

The accelerated pace of the Great Leap and the stigma attached to "idleness" increased enormously the number of women who wanted to work and changed former policy attitudes toward "housework," which was now seen as *"trivial but burdensome enough to make people stupid."* (Emphasis added)[45] Regular urban industry was limited in its ability to absorb masses of women whose lack of educational background, or even illiteracy, severely restricted the kinds of tasks they could perform. The skills most women possessed were related to their homemaking role and they could be put to use in basic street industries whose production centered on daily consumer items. Small workshops producing cloth and cooking implements or processing simple foodstuffs rapidly grew in most major cities. As more women left the home to join factory or street industry, the necessity to develop certain services became evident. Nurseries, kindergartens and mess halls appeared. Street industry began to develop beyond the needs of local residents and into other areas of light industry. Women began to experiment and learn industrial processing and techniques by actually doing it.[46] All neighborhood or street industry was guided by five basic principles. They would not apply to the government for 1) funds; 2) raw materials; 3) machines; 4) premises; 5) would not get workers in state-owned factories to work in their factories. The development of street industry was, in fact, "Operation Bootstraps." The women were encouraged to participate and help in socialist construction but were given no help or training. Street factories were characterized by poor equipment and intensive manual labor. When they were successful they were incorporated into the larger industrial system. They contracted with state-owned industry in the manner of a subsidiary. The former housewives benefitted by the acquisition of skills and, if their project was successful, they were paid. However, street industry wages were much lower than those in regular industry, capital accumulation was much slower and thus the luxury of a welfare fund to provide services such as sick leave, maternity pay or child-care was almost totally absent. In addition, they were not accorded the status of regular workers. Street industries were subsidiary production that added to the income of the state, especially in the light industry sector and production of consumer articles, and they provided an important means by which the female labor force attained skills and education, and even new attitudes. Their status, however, in the overall economic structure was ambiguous, and subject to change. (A comparison to the sweatshops of Japan or early 20th century America must take into account two important differences: Chinese women, for the most part, were not driven to work because of economic necessity, and the ideological motivation of participation in a national endeavor was very high.)

The establishment of service industries provided jobs for particular categories of women who could not have been able to work otherwise. This included old women, women with several children and those with heavy household burdens. Their work allowed them a feeling of participation in socialist construction and added to their family income.

The urban commune incorporated the street committees which were staffed mainly by resident housewives. These basic-level administrative organizations played an important role as agents of socialization. They organized the residents for participation in political and cultural studies, and for participation in national campaigns, generally oversaw the welfare services of their areas, and, most importantly, mediated disputes. These often entailed the support of women's rights against the opposition of husbands and mothers-in-law.[47] Mediation committees are part of the legal process in China. If they are unable to resolve the conflict a formal court will hear the case. "Housewives tend to staff the mediation committees in China's cities, while men predominate in the countryside."[48] In addition to the mediation committees, the lower levels of the public security system also employ large numbers of women.[49] The Women's Federation appeared to play an important role in mobilizing urban women to participation in street committees.[50] This is understandable since many of the functions of the street committee concern women. The Federation also urged the establishment of political and cultural study groups for women. To do this, mess halls have been utilized as classrooms and for newspaper reading groups in off-hours. In several areas part-time and full-time schools were established for "former housewives."[51]

There was a marked increase in the numbers of women workers during the Great Leap. In 1959 women were 15.4% of all workers and employees, and by 1963 the expansion of heavy and light industry had increased this percentage to 25%, even with the severe economic problems of 1959-62.[52] The Anshan Iron and Steel Works, which had employed no women in 1949, by 1962 had 600 women engineers, managers, technicians and designers.[53] It is significant that all of them

were educated in post-1949 China and this is evidence of an increase in the ability of women to obtain advanced education. Although the increase in working women was large, it was confirmed mainly to the light industrial sector and the traditional cotton, wool, silk and clothing industries. Anshan was clearly an exception. The industries most resistant to hiring women were large iron and steel and machinery, where the prestige and wages are highest. Resistance to women workers was largely the result of traditional attitudes toward the capabilities of women. Many supervisory personnel would not teach female workers as they did not accept women participating in industrial labor.[54] This kind of discrimination kept women in the lowest level jobs and reinforced their own sense of inferiority.

Large-scale industry, particularly the textile industry, was able to provide in-plant child-care facilities. Throughout the 1950s, and even more so in the Great Leap period, those industries employing women as a major part of their workforce provided creches and nurseries and were often praised for their adherence to the National Labor Insurance Law's provisions for maternity leave and provision of facilities for menstruating and pregnant women. Very little has been written on special facilities for the few women employees by heavy industry.

Women in urban China were also active in areas outside industry. By 1960, women were 25% of the researchers in the Chinese Academy of Sciences and 50% of those in the Chemical Industry Research Institute and in the Light Industry Research Institute. They constituted 40% of the doctors in Peking and about 30% of the student body in such key universities as Peking, Tsinghua, Peking Union Medical College, and the Chinese University of Science and Technology.[55] Most of the students came from urban families, a fact that illustrated the greater ability of those in cities to receive an education. The advances made by women in the cities did not necessarily influence the ability of peasant women to do the same. Peasant girls were still needed for housework and in the limited educational facilities available in the rural areas they were passed over in favor of their brothers, for many of the reasons already alluded to.

The urban family tended to be smaller and similar to the nuclear family prevalent in the West, with perhaps the addition of an elderly parent [56] Birth control was most successful in the cities where the effects of industrialization and urbanization were already creating pressures for reduction of family size. Smaller families meant less household chores and thus greater freedom to enter production. The development of collectivized services in the urban communes further increased the potentiality for employment, and the existence of facilities in urban areas did not raise the "cost" question of such facilities in nearly so direct and pressing way as it did in rural Chinese communes.

## Conclusion

In claiming that there is no conflict between the emancipation of women and the achievement of socialist society, the Chinese have been able to avoid a central focus on the "woman question" as it arises in the process of building that society. However, the economic development policies adopted during the Great Leap Forward, policies that were aimed at the rapid creation of socialist institutions, raised the issue of conflict between woman's equality and socialist construction in a direct and unavoidable way. In terms of the long-run goals of socialism, the two were revealed as much more mutually dependent on each other than imagined or admitted by the Chinese. In terms of the short run, there were clear indications that the trade-off between economic development and woman's liberation could be a real one. Just as the examination above revealed the contradictions between the interests of women and the process of economic development, it also suggested the importance of economic growth and technological development for women's emancipation. In a poor country, with a huge labor force in which men have historically and generally occupied the leading positions, it may make some sense to forego investment in those institutions which provide the real basis for significantly changing the role of women in society. This is not to say that all women qua women did not make important advances during the Great Leap period. The very large increase in the numbers of women in educational institutions and working in agriculture, industry and the service establishments is testimony to progress. But it is clear that at this stage the Chinese had decided that the advancement of women must not be at the expense of economic growth and technical change; i.e., the opportunity for female employment and participation must be within the context of increasing production and expansion of social services. It is important to point out, however, that this greater priority of economic development tends to perpetuate relative status inequalities between men and women. While these kinds of policies may make sense for a country as poor as China, in the long-run, strategies and priorities must be revised if equality is to be achieved.

Of all the policies adopted in the Great Leap the attempt to change the role and status of Chinese women probably resulted in the most widespread, consistent and far-reaching opposition. It was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from other problems for it involved questioning basic traditional cultural values and institutions, and half the population was involved in its scope. The Great Leap revealed three crucial areas where conflict emerged with the goals of economic development: health, education, and the role of women in the family.

In the post-Leap period, the health problem, especially in the rural areas, emerged as most central to political conflict involving women and their role in social life. The rural areas of China had always lacked medical facilities and personnel but until collectivization and the vast recruitment of women into the labor force, the urgency of the problem was not recognized. While the Great Leap showed the relationship between adequate medical services and the creation of productive human beings, the Chinese did not begin to deal with this problem until Chairman Mao's famous critique of the Ministry of Health in 1965.[57] Health care became an important and controversial issue in the Cultural Revolution. The reorganization of medical training and the development of multi-level health services – an exciting alternative to the formal medical training systems of the West – illustrate the importance of the health problem. However, due to the scarcity of human and material resources adequate resolution of this problem remains a long-term goal.

Women were also members of an educationally disadvantaged group whose contribution to the construction of socialism would be necessarily limited by their lack of skills. Even

the familiarity with modern techniques that basic literacy brings was absent. Mass mobilization and intense politicization could not substitute for basic institutional and technical change. While the Great Leap experimented with new kinds of education programs, mainly spare-time study groups which many women joined, these seem to have decreased significantly in the early 1960s. Again, the education problem surfaced in the Cultural Revolution and while the formal education system received a great deal of attention and was reorganized, it is still unclear how the extension of educational facilities into the countryside – both full-time and spare-time – has benefitted women. However, it should be pointed out that since the early 1960s the Chinese media have reported on the great advances of women in education. Most stories have focused on the improving female-male ratios in student bodies from the primary school level to the university.[58]

The extreme conservatism of the Chinese regarding the proper role of women within the family (especially in the countryside) and the apparent reluctance to force change in this sphere of life point to the traditional bio-sexual role of women as most in need of change and most difficult to change. But the necessity to develop new institutions that would be supportive of new roles for women was not clearly understood, and once attempted, during the Great Leap, this change provoked the sharpest conflict with economic development goals because of the demands it placed on limited economic, technical, and human resources. While mess halls, nurseries, and service stations sprang up everywhere, there was no overall planning for these institutions or training of personnel to staff them. In large part this was because the tasks they performed were considered "woman's work" (and women were the majority of workers) and hence not worthy of investment capital or any particular attention. Yet, these very institutions directly affect the quality of life of all the people, and their efficiency and satisfactory management are essential to releasing women from home responsibilities. The failure of the Chinese to develop these basic institutions so that they become qualitatively acceptable substitutes for the nuclear family's role in fulfilling these same functions only caters to conservative concepts of "woman's proper place" in the home (*nei-ren*).

In general, the experience of urban women in the Great Leap did not raise the specter of conflict between goals of women's liberation and that of economic development in as intense a manner as in the countryside, though there was clearly a trade-off between the two, especially in terms of the division of labor, occupation and worker classification. The urban sector, having been favored during the 1950s, was the site of most major medical facilities and almost all the Western-trained doctors. It had the largest educational institutions, and most technical and part-time schools were in the cities. More important perhaps, the cities were where women had made the greatest advances in industry, education, and as representatives in government. The Woman's Federation was strongest in the urban areas and was more experienced and successful, organizationally and in terms of female goals. In short, the advantages of past modernization and urbanization presented a wider range of alternatives to women who wished to enter production.

In both rural and urban areas women appear to be a significant political force on the local level. While the percentage of national leaders who are women is slowly increasing, the role of women in street committees in the urban areas and on the production team and brigade levels in the countryside is growing rapidly. The urban street committees staffed largely by local housewives are responsible for many functions directly affecting the quality of life of the inhabitants. Sanitation, health, primary and part-time education and the service industries fall within their province. The development of these facilities, sometimes involving necessary investment by district or municipal government is at the initiative of women.[59] Thus experience extends into the legal and coercive instruments of society.

In rural areas it is common to have a woman as deputy director of the commune and deputy leader in the production team and brigade. While it appears that these women most often are responsible for "women's work," it nevertheless legitimizes and institutionalizes women's participation In many areas, the team may be all-female and women assume responsibility for organizing work and, with it, a relationship to the larger group – brigade or commune – that is a very different one from traditional roles. As the Great Leap also showed, women's participation in organs of public decision making can have a significant impact on public policy priorities.

The Chinese experience during the Great Leap dramatically illustrated the depth of radical social change necessary to free women from traditional roles. Chinese women have made tremendous progress given their position in both traditional and transitional pre-1949 Chinese society. But the Great Leap indicated that the achievement of equality between the sexes cannot be based on the same policies as those which create the conditions for women's emancipation. The path of liberation is fairly well delineated. Now the journey to equality must begin.

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1. See Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Transitional Society* (California: Glencoe Press, 1958), and for its operation in China, Marion J. Levy, *The Family Revolution in China* (London. Oxford University Press, 1949)

2 The implicit assumption is that biological factors prevent women from successfully integrating their natural sexual-maternal roles with the economically productive or political participatory roles opened through industrialization and to which men easily enter Rather, it is stressed that the institutions which provide "female role fulfillment" remain even as socio-economic change occurs, i.e. the family and home.

3. See Wan Mu-ch'an, "How the Problem of Women Should Be Viewed," *Hung Ch'i* (Red Flag) No. 20, October 28, 1964; and Tsao Kuan-chun, (Secretary of the All-China Women's Federation), "Further Liberate Women's Labor Capacity and Channel This Force to Building Up Society in a Better Way," *Ren-Min Rih-Bao (RMRB) 6/2/58 in Survey of the China Mainland Press* (SCMP) 1791, pp. 4-8

4. Prior to 1949 the emphasis was on participating in production as the path to liberation. However, after 1953 there is a subtle change. Women will be emancipated when class exploitation and poverty are eliminated, i.e. somehow economic development will confer liberation. There is substantial ambiguity as to the role of women. See, for example, RMRB Women's Day editorial for March 8, 1956, in SCMP 1258, p. 17.

5. See *Hsin Chung-kuo fu-nu* (HCKFN) No. 4, 1955.

6. "What Housewives Must Do to Achieve the Five Goods" ("Chia-t'ing fu-nu yao nu-li tso tao wu-hao"), *Chung-kuo fu-nu* (CKFN) No. 1, 1956.

7. CKFN No. 9, 1956, illustrates the discrimination against women that existed in industry. See especially "I Already Had Three Years' Training," by Yang Fu-T'ing, and "Small Light Discipline Protect the Special Right of Women," by Deputy Director of the Labor

Department of the Chinese Peoples Republic, Liu Tsu-chun.

8. "More Women Intellectuals in China," SCMP 1245. A reprint of a report from *Kuang-ming jih-pao* cites 1600 women engineers; 1500 textile industry technicians; 2500 agricultural technicians; 7500 university and college women teachers and 310,000 in primary schools, an increase of 87% since 1953.

9. "Regulations of Urban Organizations," *New China News Agency* (NCNA), 12/31/56, in *Current Background* (CB) No. 310.

10. See Janet Salaff, "The Urban Commune in Communist China," *China Quarterly* No. 29, 1967.

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22. See CKFN Nos. 5, 6, 12 and 20, 1959. Stories discuss family relationships, especially those between husband and wife and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

23. Wu Chih-p'u (Governor of Honan), "Achievements of Honan Province in 1958," SCMP, 1973, pp. 24-34. Honan's 38,473 APCs were consolidated into 1242 Peoples Communes with 260,000 mess halls, 230,000 nurseries, 90,000 kindergartens and 13,000 maternity homes.

24. "20,000,000 Emancipated Women in Central China Province," NCNA, 2/29/60, in SCMP 2210.

25. "Women Are An Important Force in Socialist Construction," *Extracts from China Mainland Press* (ECMM) No. 168, p. 24.

26. Tsao Kuan-chun, op. cit., p. 41.

27 David and Isabel Crook, *The First Years of Yangyi Commune* (London Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1965).

28. "According to figures compiled by Lushan *Hsien* in Honan Province, women have over the past three months improved over 30,000 pieces of farming tools and household furniture of 171 different kinds. Over 5,000 women in Kiangkou *hsien*, Kweichow Province, have learned how to handle double-blade and double-wheel plows, making up over half of those rated a good hand at handling such plows." Tsao Kuan-chun, op. cit.

29. See Li Yu-hsiu, "A People's Deputy," *Women of China* No. 2, 1962.

30. Like Lu Yu-lan, a teen-ager from Hopei. See Kuo Nan-ning and Ch'en Han-t'ao, "Lu Yu-lan, A Fine Daughter of the Party," in *Survey of China Mainland Magazines* (SCMM) No. 32, p. 25.

31. See Tsai I, "Sister Liu," in *Joint Publications Research Service* (JPRS) No. 8312, No. 11, p. 129; "Energetic Woman Commune Leader in Shasi," SCMP 2451, p. 14; and "Toward Being Good at Studying Something," (Hsiang shan yu hsüeh shemma), CKFN No. 2, 1963, p. 8.

32. "Safeguard the Health of Women and Children in Rural Areas," op. cit.

33 Lin Hsiao, "The Most Urgent Needs of Women Now are Not Beauty and Luxury," (Fu-nü ti cheng tang yao ch'iu pu shih chiao ch'i ho ch'i), CKFN No. 2, 1959, p. 6.

34. Li Teh-chuan, "Regarding Women's Health, Maintain Unyielding Opposition," CKFN No 3, 1959, p. 1.

35. Tsai Chang, "The Role of Women in Socialist Construction," CB 579, pp. 9-12.

36. Kuo Chien (Chairman of the Shanghai Women's Federation), "A Short Talk About Male-Female Cooperation in the Skill Revolution," CKFN No. 13, 1959, pp. 1-2.

37. Tsao Kuan-chun, op. cit. See also "The Peoples' Commune – A Good Setup for the Thorough Liberation of Women," by a *Red Flag* commentator SCMP 2221, pp. 2-6.

38. "A Production Brigade in Kwangtung Insists on Same Pay for Men and Women Doing Same Kind of Job," SCMP 2566, pp. 5-6; "In Ching-chi Large Group Men and Women Receive Equal Pay for Equal Work and This Is Very Good" (Ching-ch'i ta-tui nan-nü t'ung-kung t'ung-ch'ru ch'e to hao) CKFN No. 11, 1961, pp. 4-5, and "Respect Women's Opinions, Arrange Better Wages" (Ts'un chung fu-nü yi-chien ho-li ting-k'e pao-kung) CKFN No. 11, 1961, pp. 4-5.

39. "The *Hsien* Woman's Federation Chairman the Masses Love" (Chün-chung ai-ti ti hsien fu-lien chu-jen) CKFN No. 1, 1962, pp. 2-3, and "Same Pay for Same Work in Ch'inhai Production Brigade," by Work Section of Jui Chin *Hsien* Woman's Federation, SCMM 291, pp. 13-15.

40. In all of the above-cited articles the brigade or commune level were the levels at which the equal pay issue was handled.

41. Tsai Chang, "The Party's General Line Illuminates the Path of Emancipation For Our Women," ECMM 220, p. 30, and see CKFN No. 11, 1961.

42. T'ien Lien-shan, "Use Women to Substitute for Men in Expanding Industry and Agriculture" (Yi nü t'i nan chih-huan kung-nung) CKFN No. 3, 1959, p. 2.

43. Chang Hsiao-mei, "The Broad Masses of Housewives Take Up the Posts of Social Labor," CB 579, p. 17.

44. Ibid.

45. "Urban Women Free From Family Chores and Join in Social Labor," SCMP 2234.

46. For example, in Chunshu Hutung, Peking, some women learned that insecticide could be made from waste sulphuric acid and iron scraps. The local No. 3 Nail Factory's waste acid and scraps were the source of raw materials. After endless but persistent experimentation they worked out the chemical process for sulphuric acid. They expanded production of chemicals and were rewarded by contracts with local factories. By 1960 they had almost 300 workers producing ten different products and in less than six months created Y7,000,000 in new income for the State. "There are Boundless Advantages to Urban People's Communes," SCMP 2258, p. 4.

47. "An Urban People's Commune in Chungking," *Women of China* No. 4, 1960, p. 17.

48. Jerome Cohen, *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China 1949-1963 An Introduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 146.

49. Ibid., p. 153.

50. Tsai Chang, "Mobilize Women Further to Take a Continuing Leap Forward Holding Aloft the Banner of Mao Tse-tung Thought," SCMP 2211, pp. 1-19.

51. "Peking's Women Participate in the Leap Forward," SCMP 1971, pp. 10-11.

52. Barry M. Richmond, *Industrial Society in Communist China* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 303.

53. Ibid., p. 304.

54. Mao Mei-tsu, story of a fitter in a clamp and pliers factory, in "Shanghai Women in the *Great Leap Forward*" (Yueh chin chung ti Shanghai fu-nü) (Shanghai: Shanghai Peoples Publishing Co., 1958); see also "Red Cloud Group" (hung chen lien) in CKFN No. 9, 1959, p. 2.

55. "Peking Women Contribute to Science, Engineering and Medicine," SCMP 2215, p. 24.

56. Janet Salaff, "Institutionalized Motivation for Fertility Limitation," in Marilyn Young, ed., *Women in China* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1973), pp. 93-145.

57. The Mao-Liu Controversy Over Rural Public Health," *Current Scene* Vol. VII, No. 12, p. 4.

58. See "Pay Attention to Selecting Girl Students," CMP-SCMP 70-35, p. 46; Chiang Ch'ün, "Seriously Tackle Problem of Girls' Schooling," CMP-SCMP 72-3, p. 96; and Political Department of the PLA Peking Command, "Selecting and Sending Outstanding Youths to Colleges," CMP-SCMP 72-11, p. 44.

59. See "Development of Street Industries," *Joint Publications Research Service – Communist China Digest* No. 15, p. 45, and Dick Anderson, "Street Committees in China–1968," *Eastern Horizons* Vol. VII, No. 6, 1968, p. 27.

# Caste, Class, and Women's Liberation in India

by *Gail Omvedt*

When Katherine Mayo wrote her notorious attack on the fitness of Indians for independence, *Mother India*, she used the subjugation and oppression of women as its driving wedge. In a sense, this was relying on an established Victorian tradition that the position of women was the measure of the advancement of a civilization. Writing in a year in which American women had only just attained the vote, Mayo had no doubts of India's failure in this respect. Today, nearly fifty years later, many foreign feminists have a different impression. In spite of the survivals of traditionalism, of the subordination of the individual to the family, of the emphasis on *mul ani chul* ("children and hearth")–the Indian version of the Western precept that "a woman's place is in the home"–it appears that women in India take part in the basic production and political life of their country as fully as in Western societies and probably play a greater role in high-level political decision-making.[1]

If we reject Mayo's conclusions, we can possibly retain her criterion: women are the measure of a society. But I would prefer Marlene Dixon's formulation: "women are the focus of every contradiction." That is, there are paradoxes and contradictions involved in women's position in Indian society, and the situation of lower-class and lower-caste women is in many ways different from that of the upper class women. To understand the position of women in a society as complex as that of India it is necessary to do more than analogize that women are an "oppressed class," a "caste" or a "colonized" group. It is necessary to see the position of women, the degree and nature of female subordination, as varying from class to class, ethnic group to ethnic group, and differing according to the type of society. In the case of India we can point to several interacting factors: (1) the continuance of certain aspects of the "traditional" caste society–but here it is necessary to emphasize the often great variations that have always existed between upper- and lower-class women; (2) the interaction of this with the socio-economic institutions of modern India; (3) the impact of the West; and (4) the results of over a century of struggle against caste orthodoxy and for national independence.

In other words, the position of Indian women today can be analyzed in terms both of varying social models (highcaste/lowcaste; hierarchical/egalitarian) and of a history of varying movements in interaction with one another. In terms of the factors outlined above, I intend to argue that (1) the nationalist and anti-caste social reform struggles have provided the greatest benefits to Indian women, overcoming many of the barriers of caste orthodoxy and providing a tradition of leadership and participation; (2) that continuing patterns of lower-caste independence and some aspects of traditional culture also provide an important basis of support for liberationary themes; (3) that the greatest barriers to the full liberation of Indian women today lie not so much in the survivals of caste orthodoxy or patriarchalism as in the continuing socio-economic inequalities that make it impossible for lower-class women to capitalize on the democratizing gains of the nationalist period; and (4) that the impact of the West has been–at best–neutral. I should add that I use as a general criterion for women's liberation equal participation in the productive and political affairs of society and freedom from sole responsibility for home and child care. Finally, like most discussions of this sort, I am casting my conclusion in general terms but rely for much of my information on very localistic data, in this case field research in Maharashtra.

## Contradictions of "Traditional India"

As with most agrarian societies, traditional upper-class India subordinated its women to the point of physical destruction (and here *sati* probably has the edge over Chinese foot-binding or Western corsetting). Concerns with caste purity not only stigmatized women as impure due to their involvement with childbirth and other features of the material world, but also necessitated full control over their sexuality. Upper-caste women thus ideally were married before puberty, passed from the control of their fathers to that of their husbands

and then of their sons, were secluded in the household and forbidden remarriage, their lives as widows so miserable that *sati* often may have seemed a way out. Like *shudras* their role was to serve; education and Sanskritic learning were not for them.[2]

There were, however, aspects of even this high-caste culture which could provide support for women, including perhaps the mother-goddess traditions of feminine energy and aggressiveness.[3] More important was the fact that (as was true of most agrarian societies) traditional Hindu upper-class patriarchalism did not apply so stringently to the lower classes. Indian peasants, with little property to pass on and little chance of attaining any status recognition, were not so concerned with patrilineal blood purity or caste standards; their women of necessity played a greater economic role and with this attained greater independence; and the *bhakti* movements which found their basis in the lower castes and peasantry gave women, as well as untouchables and *shudras*, greater religious roles.

Certainly many of the caste-class variations are visible today. The largest percentages of Indian working women are found where they always have been found—among poor peasants and agricultural laborers, as well as in certain manufacturing industries such as cotton textiles (see Table 1 for the 1961 figures, giving for comparison the proportion of women in various job categories in the U.S. for the same year). While it is primarily economic necessity that forces women of poor families to work, their greater economic independence gives them a greater social independence as well. Thus, for all of their cosmopolitan progress, it is still almost anathema for a middle- or upper-class woman to divorce and remarry. Among the lower classes, to the contrary, it seems relatively common, at least in Maharashtra. Evidence for this can be found in the divorce notices given in vernacular newspapers, a phenomenon at least as interesting as the English-language marriage ads so familiar to Westerners. An example is given below:

> *From the below-signed the notice comes to Baliram Pancham Avle near Dharampeth Pump in Nagpur: We were married about four years ago. After behaving well for about eight or nine months you beat me for no reason and took me with one bit of clothes to my mother's home and left. Since then I have not been taken back. Since I am young I can't remain alone now. I have incurred a debt of about 4800 rupees for goods and clothes. Within eight days of the date of obtaining this notice you must give the above debt and give assurances of good behavior before the panchayat. If this is not done this is understood as a notice of legal separation and you retain none of your rights as a husband over me. Dated March 25, 1972. Signed Shakuntala Baliram Pancham Avle, living at Lonkhairi in taluka and district Nagpur.*[5]

Such women (and the majority of notices are from women) are apparently free to remarry; the second marriage does not get the full religious ceremony but this makes little difference for the rights of children to inherit or for the everyday life of the remarried couple. The custom is common enough among the peasant and "allied castes" of Maharashtra to have several customary names, including *gandharva vivah*, an ancient Sanskritic term for love marriage.[6] A recent Maratha writer indicates that the custom is prevalent among the vast majority of Maratha-Kunbis in the districts of Ahmednagar, Nasik, Sholapur, parts of Poona, Khandesh and Vidarbha regions, even though the richer Marathas aiming at aristocratic status have sought to subordinate their women according to Sanskritic ideals.[7]

### TABLE 1: FEMALE LABOR PARTICIPATION IN INDIA AND THE U.S., 1960-1961

(Percentage of workers in each job category who are women)[4]

| | |
|---|---|
| **INDIA** | |
| *Total Workers* | *31.5%* |
| Cultivators | 33.3 |
| Agricultural Laborers | 45.1 |
| Manufacturing (other than household industry) | 9.9 |
| (cotton textiles) | 41.3 |
| Construction | 11.7 |
| Household Industry | 38.8 |
| Trade and Commerce | 10.7 |
| Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, plantations | 22.9 |
| Transport, Communication | 2.2 |
| Other Services | 22.4 |
| (Educational-scientific) | 18.8 |
| (Public Administration) | |
| —Central Government | 1.4 |
| —State Government | 2.5 |
| —Local Government | 10.3 |
| (Law) | 1.3 |
| (Business) | 1.4 |
| **UNITED STATES** | |
| *Total Workers* | *33.2%* |
| Farm Workers | 14.3 |
| Manual Workers | 15.1 |
| Service Workers | 65.1 |
| Clerical and Sales | 58.8 |
| Professional and Technical | 36.3 |
| Managers, proprietors etc. | 15.1 |

Such customs were also in existence in the early twentieth century. I have seen similar divorce notices in some of the nonBrahman newspapers of the 1920s, and remarriages, or *gandharva vivah*, were reported with relative frequency in the Satyashodhak ceremonies (religious ceremonies performed without Brahman priests) which were part of the nonBrahman movement. There is also at least some quantitative evidence,

though it is indirect. According to the 1931 Census, there was about a 15% difference among married and widowed women between the ages of 24 to 43 among Brahmans on the one hand, and Marathas and Mahars (Untouchables) on the other in Bombay Province, and about a 10% difference in the Central Provinces and Berar (Vidarbha-Nagpur region)—that is, about 15% more Brahman women were widowed than among the nonBrahmans, about 15% less were married. These figures may be taken, it can be argued, as an indication of the rate of remarriage of widows among the peasant castes and Untouchables, although it appears that high-status Marathas in both the Central Provinces and Bombay were more similar to Brahmans.[8]

### TABLE 2: MARRIAGE STATUS OF FEMALES, AGE 24 to 43[9]

| | *% Married* | *% Widowed* |
|---|---|---|
| Chitpavan Brahmans (Bombay) | 67.1 | 27.0 |
| Deshastha Brahmans (Bombay) | 69.9 | 29.2 |
| Brahmans (CP-Berar) | 73.4 | 25.5 |
| Banias (CP-Berar) | 74.3 | 24.1 |
| Marathas (CP-Berar) | 78.9 | 19.8 |
| Kunbis (CP-Berar) | 84.2 | 15.0 |
| Maratha-Kunbis (Bombay Deccan) | 84.4 | 14.9 |
| Mahars (CP-Berar) | 83.9 | 13.6 |
| Mahars (Bombay) | 81.1 | 16.9 |

Thus lower-class nonBrahman women had, from the beginning, a degree of the social freedom and independence that upper-caste reformers were seeking. Furthermore, in spite of pressures for "Sanskritization" operating on those nonBrahmans who laid claim to aristocratic status, by and large the overall effect of the nonBrahman movement of the period was not to Sanskritize customs but to resist ideologically the adaption to "Brahmanism" and to maintain the relative liberalism of lower-class customs.[10] There is at least some evidence to indicate similar high-low caste variations in other parts of India.[11] In fact, it can be argued that much of the emphasis on the Sanskritizing aspects of caste conferences and lower-caste movements ignores the facts that most of the conferences as such related primarily to a small, upper-class section of the relative castes, and that broader scale anti-caste movements, especially southern and western Indian non-Brahmanism, had a strong anti-Sanskritizing theme.

We may conclude that Indian lower-class women remain unliberated not so much because of survivals of "traditional" cultural patriarchalism but rather because of the economic inequalities weighing upon the lower castes as a whole. Economic necessity forces them to work in the most low-paid occupations simply for survival; such work makes these women independent, vigorous and often extremely militant. (During my research visit to India, in 1970-71, I heard quite often that in almost every type of demonstration, whether among workers, agricultural laborers, etc. it was the women who were in the forefront, fighting, breaking through the police lines. When I returned in 1973 after a period of intensive agitation among poor peasants due to famine conditions, this tendency of women to act both militantly and with a sense of the power of organization was even more remarkable, and was commented upon by almost every organizer). At the same time the lack of socially provided childcare institutions (the joint family is less often found among the lower classes) or communal living arrangements continues to place the primary burdens of family care in their hands; and the lack of really universal education means that while it is possible for some peasant and working class boys to get at least the beginnings of literacy, this has not yet reached their sisters. Lower-class women are thus unable to share the leadership roles that a few educated Indian women have attained. On one occasion I heard a communist organizer urge a group of militant women agricultural laborers to come and join study circles: "It's not enough to fight; you should come forward and be leaders!" And the most energetic woman of the group replied, "But what can I do? I have six children."

## The Impact of the West

The impact of a "modern" industrial society is usually credited with being the main force behind the transformation of traditional nonWestern cultural patterns, and it is usually assumed that "universalism" (equality of opportunity for all) is a major feature of the Western model. Certainly it is true at one level that colonial rule saw the development in India of the social reform and anti-caste movements which focused on the subjugation of women, and that the very reaction to this rule, nationalism, brought women into the struggle. Beyond this, it is hard to see how British rule or the development of industrialism had any positive effect on the position of women.

For one thing, industrialization by itself by no means releases women from the household or makes it possible for them to have equal career opportunities with men. Neither Britain nor the U.S., longtime "models of modernization," exhibits much equality in this regard, and there is evidence to indicate that in some parts of the world colonialism worsened the position of women who previously had played important economic and political roles.[12] British colonial rule definitely did not present Indian women with models of active professionals, career women or political leaders. With the possible exception of Annie Besant (who was anathema to officialdom) and perhaps of the vigorous women missionaries (who were clearly low-status on the colonial totem pole),[13] Anglo India was a male-dominated society and it was always The *Men* Who Ruled India.

Manisha Roy points to one cultural pattern that is definitely of Western origin and has influenced upper-class Indians: the model of romantic love and accompanying concepts of individual free choice. Yet, however much we may applaud individualism, it is hard to say from a woman's point of view that the tradition of romantic love has institutionalized any real sexual equality in Western culture. To the contrary, most of those concerned today about women's liberation in the United States would argue that the concept of a young woman finding her fulfillment in the love of a

man—while he has other realms of self-fulfillment—has been an oppressive and limiting one.

## Anti-Caste and Anti-Colonial Movements for Change

While the direct model of the Western world itself did not do much for Indian women, the movements for social change that arose under colonial rule did. Here it is important to look at two types of movements and their interaction: social reform or anti-caste movements, whose most radical forms can be described as cultural revolt, and nationalist movements (i.e. anti-feudal and anti-colonial movements). I believe that their connection with the issue of women can be summarized in two statements: first, that any serious cultural revolt required an attack on the subordination of women; second, that any serious nationalist struggle required concessions to and linkages with movements of cultural revolt, including that for women's emancipation.

The subordination of women was crucial to the general hierarchical organization of caste society, just as it is crucially related to the functionally justified cultural hierarchies of any agrarian society.[14] For this reason, and because women are crucial in passing on culture, any serious attack on such traditional hierarchies must deal with the position of women. We can understand, then, why it is that the first well-known essays of Mao Tse-tung in China—before even he developed into a Marxist—dealt with the suicide of a forcibly married young woman and the relationship of such cases to the "feudal" social structure the young radicals were attacking.[15] An Indian example is equally interesting: evidently early communist organizing also made a point of supporting the political participation of women, and when they moved into the rural areas of Andhra in the 1930s and '40s, a famous anticommunist play focused on this very issue: it portrayed village women being seduced into sexual abandonment and forced into political life. In other words, communists were accused of subverting Indian tradition, and the focal point, the crucial symbol of this "subversion," was the emancipation of women.[16]

To go back to an earlier period, not only did elite social reform focus on such issues and widow remarriage and women's education, lower-caste radicalism took up the issue as well. Jotirao Phule, perhaps the greatest of 19th-century social radicals, realized that equality and the destruction of caste hierarchy could not be achieved without bringing equality to the social groups most oppressed by the system;[17] thus his earliest practical efforst at reform were the founding of schools first for girls, then for Untouchable children in the 1850s. Later, when the SatyashodhakSamaj was founded in 1873, its pledge included a commitment to the equality of all men and women and a promise to educate both sons and daughters. Phule was capable of becoming emotionally involved over the issue—one of his polemical articles involved a scathing attack on one of his own colleagues for sexist behavior—and showed an awareness of the issue of language-embedded sexism that has only become more general today. In his final book, *Sarvajanik Satyadharma*, an effort to create a secular ethics, he strives throughout to use non-sexist phraseology; instead of the Marathi equivalent of a phrase such as "all men are equal" he used instead and very consistenly, the term *sarve ekander stri-purush*, "each and every woman and man."[18]

The NonBrahman movement after Phule did not retain his high commitment to the betterment of women's position even to the degree that it did with regard to support for Untouchable rights. There was, for instance, only one woman I know of in the early 20th century who could be described as a movement activist; and for all the Satyashodhak pledge, nonBrahmans did in fact educate their sons before their daughters and expected their wives to maintain the home while they propagandized against Brahman dominance. Nevertheless, the issue of women remained important as one of the social reform themes in terms of which nonBrahmans opposed conservative nationalist dominance (that of Tilak's party) and sought alliances, first with liberal Brahmans, later with Gandhians, against them. One such important case was in 1920 when nonBrahmans joined with Brahman liberals to demand free and compulsory education for girls as well as boys in Poona city. When Tilak took the stage to put forward the conservatives' argument that there were only funds sufficient to educate boys, nonBrahman rowdies drove him from the stage—something of a first for the leader who had been called the "uncrowned king of Poona city" and whose own young followers had up to that point controlled the streets; the beginning of the end of conservative domination of Maharashtrian politics.

Thus the motives that led Indian men to support women's emancipation derived from their own general commitment to the destruction or reform of "traditional" caste hierarchies. But it should also be stressed that women themselves were involved in the struggle, though as with many other oppressed groups it appears that the original lack of education and access to resources of the women have left a paucity of records about this participation. For instance, Phule had referred to a Marathi book written by a nonBrahman woman, Tarabai Shinde, *The Comparison of Men and Women*, but both this 19th century woman and her writings have disappeared from available records.[19] More well known is the Brahman Christian reformer, Pandita Ramabai; her book, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, is available, and it is possible that her efforts (and the fear of Christian proselytizing associated with them) helped to motivate male reformers such as D. K. Karve to establish homes for widows. By the 1920s, women were more clearly coming forward on their own. Elite efforts included the Indian Women's Association, established in 1917 with the support of the English leader Margaret Cousins, and the All India Women's Conference, established in 1929 as a general nationalistic and social organization. It appears that women at many levels were beginning to hold their own conferences (caucuses, we might call them today) in conjunction with other movements of the period.[20] For instance, a "NonBrahman Women's Conference" was held along with other nonBrahman conferences in 1929, and the women supported the general Satyashodhak boycotts of Brahman-dominated religious events, but stressed that "men have done nothing for women throughout history" and condemned political leaders in the legislative councils for doing nothing for women.[21] And it might be pertinent here to note that Jawaharlal Nehru records that his wife, Kamala, "considered herself a champion of women's rights against the tyranny of men" and along with her general Congress organizing work had the habit of giving speeches on "women's

struggle for freedom against man-made laws and customs" and urging women "not to be too submissive to their menfolk."[22] It could be suggested in this regard that Indira is a child of her mother as well as her father—and that just as many American college women were motivated by their involvement in civil rights and anti-war struggles to ask why opposition to oppression shouldn't concern their oppression as well, so many upper-class Indian women have moved into their own version of women's liberation as an aspect of their participation in the nationalist struggle.

And this points to the connection between nationalism and cultural revolt. The Indian National Congress arose as an elite movement and by the end of the 19th century became dominated by the socially conservative who were determined to exclude questions of social reform, but as long as it remained confined to this policy and to elite circles it remained isolated and powerless. To gain any kind of mass base, the national movement had to make important concessions to the issues represented by the nonBrahman and similar movements as well as class-based movements—issues that involved lower-caste rights vis-a-vis the twice-born, peasant rights vis-a-vis landlords and, to at least some degree, women's rights. In other words, it had to become, to at least some extent, economically and socially radical. This at any rate was the lesson forced upon those Poona orthodox Brahmans, who had early dominated the western Indian nationalist movement, by the nonBrahman and liberal attacks on Tilak. And it was becoming clearer throughout the decade of the 1920s that women were providing an energy to the nationalist struggle that could not be denied. As Nehru writes of the salt march,

> *Many strange things happened in those days, but undoubtedly the most striking was the part of the women in the national struggle. They came out in large numbers from the seclusion of their homes and, though unused to public activity, threw themselves into the heart of the struggle. The picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops they made their preserve. Enormous processions of women alone were taken out in all the cities; and, generally, the attitude of the women was more unyielding than that of the men. Often they became Congress "dictators" in provinces and in local areas.*[23]

And the genius of Gandhi was not that he appealed to traditional religious values (others had tried that before with little mass success), but that he recognized the basic forces that were shaking Indian society, from peasant upsurges to anti-caste revolts and the emerging energy of women coming out of their traditional roles, and that he saw the necessity of identifying the national movement with these forces. And he did identify himself and the movement with them, although in a coopting, conservative manner which sought to channel the energies of these movements into a Congress under his control. His way of dealing with women was apparently symptomatic of his general orientation. He made an important place for them in his movement, in constructive work and in *satyagraha* campaigns, organizing and street demonstrations, but, as Karen Leonard has pointed out, his writings generally insisted on an essentially complementary sex-role model which saw women finding their greatest fulfillment in home and children. Women were quite an important part of his households and his ashrams, and he sometimes insisted on a fully equalitarian and non-sex-differentiated upbringing for boys and girls—but in a household in which he was the master; he could never give equality to his own wife whose very traditionalism appears as a form of resistance to his bullying.[24]

These issues aside, there is as yet too little study either of the general issue of women's struggles in India or of the complex interweaving of peasant, working class, anti-caste and women's movements with nationalism in the 1920s through the 1940s. Little has been written of the Gandhian women who played important organizing roles, or of the role of women like Kamala Nehru or Aruna Ashraf Ali, or of communist leaders like Godavari Parulekar, who became the organizer of the Warlis, an oppressed tribe in Thana district and who has recently published her fascinating account of their life and struggles, *Jawha Manus Jaga Hota* (When Man Awakes). Indeed, no history of the social and national struggle has yet been written that draws together the kind of forces depicted in the novel *Kanthapura*,[25] which describes one village during the independence struggle with its interweaving of nationalism, mysticism, opposition to Untouchability and attempts at plantation labor organizing. It should be remembered that while the Kanthapura struggle begins among the Brahmans of the village, its most crucial leaders are not only the young Gandhian hero Moorthy but also the wealthy but discontented widow Rangamma, who reads of the Soviet Union in her newspapers, gives nationalist interpretations of the Vedas, and provides her house as a center. Themes that are often neglected in conventional historical accounts dominate the novel: the role of Untouchability work, not as a distraction from organizing[26] but as an important stimulator of nationalist activity, the involvement with the coolies of the nearby British plantation, and the role of women in maintaining both organization and a spirit of militancy during the period of government repression, indeed, the first and only volunteer *satyagraha* corps of the village is the women's unit organized by Rangamma. "No, sister, no, nothing can ever be the same again," says the narrator (a woman) at the end. Nationalist involvement both drew upon and fed the desire of Indian women for liberation.

## Conclusions

Indian women, then, are the inheritors of a very complex pattern of social models and interacting social movements, and in assessing their position and the reasons for it, it would be well to remember these complexities Not only the cultural traditions that have bound them and continue to bind them, but also the traditions that give support to independence and participation; not only the ability of women to attain some leadership positions and recognition but also the fact that their labor market participation continues to be concentrated in the lowest and most oppressive fields—these are all aspects of that continuing complexity.

In both India and China a national movement grew that relied crucially on the energies of poor and oppressed social groups, the role of Chinese women being depicted in such accounts as Jack Belden's *China Shakes The World* Unlike China, however, the Indian movement drew such lower-caste and feminist energies into a movement that was controlled throughout by a caste and class elite, with the result that no social revolution was ever carried through in the villages.

Indian women have benefited from the "democratizing" aspects of the national movement, but it is primarily upper-class women who have been able to consolidate these gains. What prevents lower-class women from sharing in them is not so much caste prejudice or the traditional forms of male chauvinism as the continuing patterns of socio-economic inequalities (which also help to maintain caste prejudice and male chauvinism): lack of access to land and economic resources; the absence of educational facilities, the absence of a collectively organized society that could take the burden of individual home and child care off the shoulders of the wife.

For the United States as well as India, the abolition of the nuclear family as an institution in which the woman is limited to the roles of maintaining a privatized home socializing children and providing emotional support for her husband is crucial for the liberation of women. India is perhaps fortunate in not being so heavily afflicted with that particular institution as the U.S. (though it has had its own form of patriarchalism) and in having at least some cultural traditions and historical experiences to support the acceptance of active, energetic feminism. But in both India and the U.S. women participate in work at extremely unequal levels, and in neither have the necessary institutions for community child care and work been created. For women of both countries, perhaps. the major struggles lie ahead.

## Notes

1 While it does seem true that women play greater leadership roles in educational and political arenas in India, we should be cautious about jumping to conclusions regarding the overall effects of labor market participation. According to 1960-61 figures (see Table 1) women participate highly unequally in both India and the U.S. In both countries they were about 1/3 of all workers, in both they are highly unlikely to be found in high-level legal and business professions In both they are concentrated in the most low-paid and nonunionized categories of work, although in India this represents agricultural production, while American women have been joining the white collar positions—clerical, sales, services—rather than basic manufacturing. The 1971 Indian Census figures show a lower participation in the work force for women that may modify these conclusions, but this may in part be due to different methods of classification; see Sulabha Brahme "Stri-Mukhti Samaj-Karan."

2 I have on some occasions heard upper-class Indian men say, to show their liberalism, "I only believe in two castes—men and women!" Undoubtedly there is little question here as to which is the Brahman, which the Shudra!

3 Here we might speculate about the fact that Indian religious-philosophical tradition is not quite so patriarchal as Western culture, not only is God described in many accounts as *ma-bap* rather than "Father," but the traditional philosophical dualism of Purusha-Prakriti, etc , has the female energy representing energy, activity, while the male principle represents meditation and passivity. This is the opposite of the Western dualism, though it could also be added that Indian culture values the meditative-passive principle more highly.

4. These figures are taken from the *Census of India, 1961*, Volume I, Part II-B(i), pp. 86-7, and Al Syzmanski, "Trends in the American Class Structure," *Socialist Revolution*, No. 10, July-August 1972.

5. I owe thanks to Professor Y A Wadaskar and Nagesh Chaudhuri for pointing out these notices to me

6. Dr. Baba Adhav, "Deshmukh Maratha Striyance Dasya" (Slavery of Deshmukh Maratha Women) in *Sadhana*, Independence Day special number, 1970, p. 20.

7. Ibid., p. 21.

8. From the *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. VIII, Part I, pp. 184-9; and Vol. XIII, Part I, pp. 197-201.

9. One of the few village studies to deal with women also provides evidence on this issue, G. S. Ghurye, *The Mahadev Kolis* (Bombay· Popular Book Depot, 1957), also describes freedom of divorce, separation and remarriage for lower-caste women; while the Kolis are sometimes described as a "tribal" group, they were in this area basically peasant cultivators and, as Ghurye notes, shared social customs with the surrounding Maratha-Kunbis.

10. Most Satyashodhak ceremonies simply maintained the prevalent peasant customs but used a nonBrahman officiant, one informant, the son of a Khatik Dhangar leader, emphasized the stress of widow remarriage in opposition to orthodox pressures.

11. Some of these differences are summarized in David Mandelbaum, *Society in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 47-54.

12. For example, in parts of Africa women's position may have declined because the new colonial economic roles—mines, factories, education oriented to clerical positions—opened up primarily for men, overriding traditional economic roles of market women. See Marjorie Mbilinyi, "The 'New Woman' and Traditional Norms in Tanzania," *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1972), pp. 57-72.

13. In fact, it would be interesting to have an analysis of the missionary role as one of the means by which women could escape the oppressions and limitations of Victorian society.

14. That is, in societies as diverse as Hindu India, Confucian China and medieval Europe, the subordination of women in the family was justified ideologically as part of a general organic hierarchy in which each had its role, to give an example, "As the universe was ordered in a great chain of being, so the nation was regulated by obedience to a hierarchy of superiors leading up to the king, so society was composed of various estates . and so the family was ordered by obedience of wife and children to the *pater familias* " Laurence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p. 21.

15. Nancy Milton, "Women in China," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* (1971), pp. 110-111.

16. The play is described in A. S. R. Chari, *Lid Off Andhra Anti-Communism* (Bombay: Peoples' Publishing House, 1945).

17. On this issue we might quote Lenin's polemic against abstract equality: "We say to the workers and peasants: Tear the masks from the faces of those liars [who talk about freedom in general, equality in general] ... Ask them: Equality between what sex and what other sex? Between what class and what other class? ... Not freedom for all, not equality for all, but a *fight* against the oppressors and exploiters, the abolition of every possibility of oppression and exploitation—that is our slogan! Freedom and equality for the oppressed sex! Freedom and equality for the workers, for the toiling peasants. . ." *The Woman Question*, pp. 59-60.

18. See his collected writings, *Mahatma Phule Samagra Wangmay* (Bombay, 1969) pp. 341-442.

19. Ibid., pp. 295-304 (I owe thanks to Professor Ram Bapat for help in translation).

20. The IWA and the IAWC are described in Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu* (London· Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 147-56, 192-98.

21 *Vijayi Maratha*, December 18, 1929.

22. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom* (Boston. Beacon Press, 1958), pp. 181, 200

23. Ibid., pp. 161-62.

24. See Eleanor Morton, *The Women in Gandhi's Life* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1953); also Erik Erikson, "Letter to Gandhi," *New York Review of Books*, July 31, 1969.

25. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (New York· New Directions, 1963)

26. Most upper-class Congress leaders, including leftists such as Nehru and communists such as E. M. S. Nambudiripad, tended to view the orientation to anti-caste work as in conflict with and detracting from nationalist political work. And for the upper and middle classes, who were by and large also caste elites, it is true that the issue appeared as a choice. But where a stress on cultural revolt (anti-Untouchability) tended to lose mass support for nationalism among the elite, it attracted it among the lower classes. In addition, as Daniel Berman has pointed out, Gandhi's "constructive program" functioned as a training ground for cadres in periods between political crises.

# Sexual Class in India

by Susan Mody and Sharayu Mhatre

In the past decade the Women's Liberation Movement has attained a significant role in the social and political struggles of the West Since the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, there have been innumerable books, magazines and articles dedicated to an analysis of the oppression of women and to the organization of women to destroy the fetters binding them and to liberate themselves to enjoy a new destiny. This aspiration has found expression in various organizations ranging from the purely individualistic to the consciously political. Activities have been as unconventional as "no-bra" demonstrations and the adoption of the non-sexist title "Ms." and as pragmatic as community day-care centers for the children of working mothers. Women's lib protagonists have gone so far as to decry the very existence of sexual, i.e., biological, differences between men and women and to proclaim the abolition of such differences as the only way of achieving ultimate liberation.

In India, women's magazines like *Femina* and *Eve's Weekly* have taken up the cause—attacking the restrictive role of the "housewife" and discriminatory employment practices —on behalf of the economic elite. This bias is reflected in their interpretation of women's problems here. Their approach may be legitimate for that elite, whose level of education and employment opportunities make possible the wholesale import of women's consciousness as it has been expressed in the West. But such an approach cannot be deemed an indigenous mass response and has rightly been rejected by those who understand the class nature of our society.

On the other hand, there has been an increasing emphasis from the middle class on the necessity for women to organize around issues like rising prices and unethical consumer practices like the adulteration of foodstuffs. The number of women's demonstrations organized has been heralded as a significant achievement. It is a success, however, not of rising sexual class consciousness, but of the continued deceptions perpetrated in both the economic and sexual spheres. The use of the demonstration as a political weapon in the economic struggle focuses the attention and direction of the people towards economist measures of price controls, etc., and away from an objective understanding of the systematic reasons for rising prices, "shortages" of rations, etc. At the same time, the participation of women in such a struggle is accepted willingly and even encouraged because it is a logical extension of her role in the kitchen that she should be the one who worries about balancing the budget in the face of scarcity conditions. The economic issues remain unresolved, essentially unchallenged, and the women's frustrations are channeled back into the same old patterns.

The voice of working-class women has been heard, but faintly, and then only through traditional trade union slogans.

* Published first in Marathi in *Magova,* Women's Liberation Special Issue, September 1973.

Our so-called progressives have meanwhile assumed that the problems "between the sexes" are necessarily and automatically resolved under the compunctions of economic survival which rule the lives of the peasant and working class masses. It is further assumed that when such problems do arise, their solution lies solely within the solution of the economic problems.

Thus, there has as yet been no proper analysis of sexual class in India and no understanding of the necessities of a mass women's movement. The reasons for this must be sought in the very nature of sexual oppression in India.

Women have historically been relegated to the status of property and have been subjected to the same attitudes of protection with which men treat their land and capital. The evolution of the caste system out of progress in food production and the necessity to control land and surplus signalled the crystallization of the woman's role as "child-bearer" into her social identity. It became essential for the requirements of caste rigidity that lineage be "pure," i.e., that the parentage of a child be unquestionable. The nature of reproduction demanded that the woman's, but not the man's, fidelity be ensured. The institution of purdah placed physical restraints on the woman and the glorification through literature and law of the Sita ideal encouraged the woman herself to view her chastity as her most prized possession. Women, i.e. the men's interests, were further "protected" by restrictions on widow remarriage and the inheritance of property. The practice of *sati* came into being at a time when scarcity of land demanded extraordinary steps to prevent its transfer out of the family. Religion sanctioned and enshrined such practices into the most viciously oppressive social institutions. The family, ruled by the feudal patriarch, became the repository of "fulfillment" for the woman—she who obeyed the impulse of her "nature" as a dedicated mother and a chaste wife was ensured of respect and security in the community. (It has been pointed out that one of the major reasons for the failure of family planning among women in India has been the strength of the woman's own dependence on motherhood to establish her identity and maintain a sense of self-respect. It is ironic that she is thus made to reject one of the most important tools by which independence is made possible.)

The end-product of this historical process is a woman whose self-image is severely distorted and repressed. This is at least partly responsible for her present silence on the problems she faces. But it must be recognized at the same time that her public voice has been long stifled in our male-dominated society. And she has been given little encouragement, as yet, to shake off this imposed reticence and speak on her own behalf of her problems and their solutions.

In the absence of a self-conscious statement from women, we can at present best look to an indirect but eloquent substitute in the following interviews.

## The Slum

The women interviewed live in one of the slums of Bombay. The slum is owned and administered by the Municipal Corporation. The population is mostly Marathi-speaking; 53% Hindu, 23% Neo-Buddhist, 16% Muslim, 8% Christian. ("Neo-Buddhist" in this area of India refers to a large section of ex-Untouchables who converted to Buddhism as a protest against Hindu caste traditions.) There are approximately 750 women for every 1,000 men. The majority of women fall into the age group 35-55. Literacy is almost nil for women over 35, while in the 5-14 age group 47.2% are literate, 15-24, 39.5%; 25-35, 29.5%. Only 12.3% of the female population is employed. 95% of all employed women earn less than Rs. 100 per month.

The main road approaching the slum is lined on one side by stalls operated by women selling chilis, garlic, vegetables and a few potatoes. Crude dirt pathways run from the road into the slum proper, which consists of brick chawls in long parallel rows. In the monsoon, the paths become muddy canals, virtual moats surrounding the tenements on the fringe of the slum.

The men of the slum bathe and defecate in the small open areas between groups of chawls. The women must wait in long queues for an hour or more to use the centrally located taps and latrines. There is, on the average, one tap for 55 persons and one W.C. for 38 persons. 20-25% of these meager facilities are always out of order.

There is no park or public garden anywhere in the vicinity of the slum. The children play in the open areas alongside pigs blackened with mud, chickens and goats. The women keep these animals as a supplement to the family income. The only recreational facilities are sports clubs which have been built at the initiative of the young men of the slum and are for men only.

Most of the women are outside in the afternoons in the narrow space between the chawls, cleaning lentils and rice, washing the children and chatting with their neighbors. Many young men, who are unemployed, are seen hanging around in small groups or sleeping on cots outside the tenements.

## Janabai

Janabai gives her age as 45. Though she appears much older, her tiny frame is erect and strong. Each of her arms bears two dozen green bangles and is covered with tattoos in decorative geometrical patterns. She refers to these as the only thing she will carry with her in death.

A Neo-Buddhist, she was born in a village in Satara district, Maharashtra. She first came to Bombay as a child with her family, but returned to the village when the family decided their land offered a more secure income than urban employment. She never took part in the actual tilling of the land, but spent her time in the home. She was one of eleven children, but only three survived—Janabai and two elder brothers. She never went to school. She says she would have liked to, but girls were not sent to school in those days.

Her marriage was arranged when she was about 12 years old. Her husband, a farmer of the same religion, paid a bride-price of Rs 60. They remained in the village, Janabai giving birth to two sons. According to her, they left the village about 25 years ago because of an incident in which her husband, returning from the fields one day, stepped on a snake, which bit his sandal. He wound the snake around his umbrella and threw it into a nearby tree. The legend goes that

*photos on pp 51, 53, 54, 55, 59, and 63 courtesy Hari Sharma.*

a snake, once harmed, remembers the injury and seeks revenge. When, a month later, they were disturbed in the house by the "noises of a cock," the neighbors said that the snake had come to take his revenge. Janabai advised her husband to leave the village to escape the snake. They decided to come to Bombay and settled in the slum, where the husband's mother and brother were living. After one year, they moved into the room where they are presently living.

The didn't have to pay any purgree for their room, which is about 8 feet by 10 feet with an enclosed veranda of about 4 feet by 5 feet. The interior room, which is used as a kitchen-cum-washing area, is quite dark and sparsely furnished with one small barred window close to the ceiling. The veranda, a bit more cheerful as it receives the daylight from a larger front window, contains a small bed, a sewing machine which belongs to the community at large, several photographs, including large ones of Nehru and John Kennedy, and Janabai's eldest son's Wireman Apprentice certificate. They paid Rs 600 to have water and electricity installed inside the house.

Janabai's children are almost grown now. In addition to the two sons born in the village, she has three sons and three daughters. One son died in infancy. The three daughters are all married and live separately. The eldest son, who is the only child to have completed SSC, is also married and has one child. He and his family live with Janabai and her husband, as do the four unmarried sons. The youngest son, aged 14, is still in school; the other three have all left school, but have not found employment. One son suffers from epilepsy and is under treatment.

The eldest son and Janabai's husband provide the family income. Both work for the B.E.S.T. (Bombay bus system) which, she says, deducts Rs 200 monthly from their salaries and supplies the family with provisions. Janabai manages the rest of their income, pays the rent (Rs 100 per month) and runs the household. Most of her time is occupied with cooking, cleaning, washing and looking after the ten hens she keeps for eggs and breeding. Although she sold vegetables in the market at one time, she says she now feels tied to the house, as her daughter-in-law "can't cope" with the work alone.

This daughter-in-law, who was married to Janabai's eldest son at the age of 18, came from Janabai's village. She studied up to the 7th standard there. Now, she rarely goes out and seems to be entirely in the background in the household. The neighbors say she is often beaten by her husband.

Janabai is worried for her husband's health. He has been short-tempered and hard of hearing lately. She thinks something is wrong with his head. He has been taking shock treatments at a local hospital, which seem to help, but the family must bear the expense. They fear retrenchment if they apply for medical assistance from the B.E.S.T., as the company doesn't know of this illness.

Janabai's social life consists of a visit to her married daughter in Colaba once a month and the occasional community function. She doesn't go to the cinema, but listens to the radio for news and music. She returns to her village once in 4 or 5 years.

Janabai sees Bombay problems in terms of insufficient facilities to meet the growing pressure of population. She bemoans the lack of sanitary and educational facilities in her area. According to her, prices are rising because of black

market traffic in grains and lack of political control. U.S. aid, she says, is "what they feed the animals over there." Although she feels it is necessary for women to work outside the home to meet the rising cost of living, the problem of caring for the children remains unsolved.

Janabai voted for the Congress party in the last election, but claims ignorance of party policies. She was told, she says, to vote for the "cow and calf" (election symbol of the party). She believes, however, that the parties have failed to help the people and that people have lost faith in their vote-mongering promises. Janabai doesn't react to the idea of a woman prime minister, but claims "Indira hasn't done anything for us. She hasn't given my sons jobs."

One of Janabai's sons is supposed to be the reincarnation of her husband's father, as he was born at the same time the old man died. They must, therefore, treat him with special respect. If she should beat him, her arms ache until she begs his forgiveness. He will be married soon, and Janabai is looking forward to the arrival of a new daughter-in-law to free her from the household. She wants to return to selling vegetables in the marketplace.

## Shevanti

Shevanti is twenty-two. Attractive and animated, she has an air of self-assurance about her, voicing her opinions with conviction. Originally employed as a domestic servant, she found this type of work distasteful and left it. While looking for another job, she did various kinds of handiwork—embroidered handkerchiefs, woven table mats, and so

forth—to earn an income. After more than a year of unemployment, she found her present job in a ready-made garments factory. She earns Rs 100 per month.

A Hindu of the Dakshini caste, Shevanti was born in a village in Satara district, Maharashtra. Her mother was joint owner with her brother of some land. Because of friction between them, Shevanti's family came to Bombay. Shevanti was five years old at that time. Her father was in the military and the family stayed in military housing in Colaba for some time. Later, they moved to Sion, and then to the slum, where they purchased a room for Rs 1100.

The room is about 10 feet by 10 feet and is subdivided to provide a separate room which is rented out to another family. A long shelf holds tins of grain and foodstuffs and in one corner there is a makeshift table with some books on it. The family paid Rs 13 for an electrical connection. They have no water tap, however, and must pay to bring water from outside. They use a public latrine.

Shevanti never went to school, but has taught herself to read and write Marathi. She also speaks fluent Hindi, unlike most of the women in the area. She regrets not having any formal education because it restricts her employment opportunities.

When Shevanti was twelve, a marriage was arranged to a Hindu boy of the same caste. He was a matriculate and lived in Bombay. According to tradition, Shevanti returned to her parents' home after five days with the husband. Her brother intervened at this point to encourage her not to return to her husband, who was, he said, shiftless and good-for-nothing. The parents were persuaded that the marriage had been a mistake and a divorce was obtained after a year. (Studies have shown that problems of sexual adjustment are often responsible for such cases.) Today, Shevanti is accepted as an unmarried girl; not many people know of the marriage. However, the neighbors criticize her for remaining single. Shevanti defends her position by saying that she supports herself and is not a financial burden to anyone. She is not concerned with getting married, but says she would consider it if she knew a suitable man.

Shevanti works from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., six days a week. Her mother, younger sister and sister-in-law manage the household work, but Shevanti makes many of the decisions. She spends half of her salary on provisions and puts the other half aside for expenses. Her brother also works in a nearby factory. Her father is now retired.

Shevanti spends her free time visiting friends and doing handiwork. She is eager to join a local badminton club, but this would mean getting home as late as 10 at night. The neighbors would talk about her, she says. She rarely sees films because she doesn't like them. She reads Marathi newspapers and borrows magazines from a local library. She enjoys listening to the radio, especially to Marathi dramas, but rarely gets her choice of programs.

Shevanti thinks the problems of Bombay lie in the lack of educational facilities and employment opportunities. Poverty is responsible for the parents' inability to provide for their children, she says. She thinks that the parents must be educated to be able to make correct decisions for their children.

Shevanti didn't vote in the recent elections. She feels the parties haven't done anything for the people and offer only empty promises. She says a political party cannot solve a community's problems unless the community itself is organized to act.

She says that a woman must work outside the home, not only because it is necessary to provide extra income, but also to avoid being dependent on anyone else. Shevanti is proud to be self-supporting and thinks that the only way to combat the rising cost of living is for each individual to seek employment. Her chief ambition is to organize embroidery classes to teach other women a marketable skill.

## Lucy

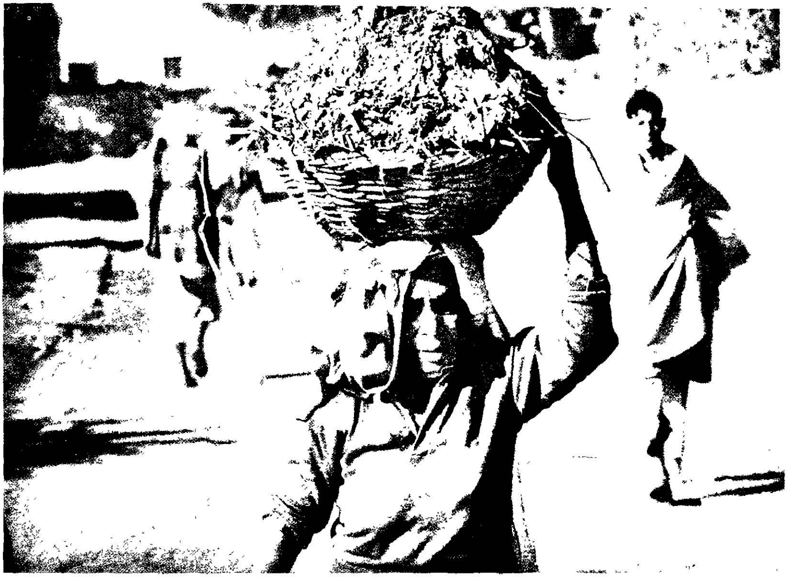
Lucy, a Roman Catholic, is a twenty-seven-year-old widow who lives with her four children and a man in a room in the slum. The room is 8 feet by 10 feet with a tin roof. The walls have turned black from the kerosene fumes from the primus stove. In one corner of the room, there is a wall about 2 feet high which encloses an area of 2 feet by 2 feet. This is the "mori," which is used for bathing and cleaning utensils. A clothes-line runs across two walls. On this are hung the washed clothes. There is an iron bed in one corner. A broken-down cupboard stands against the wall. The only light that comes into the room is from a small barred window high on the back wall. Lucy doesn't have electricity, since she can't afford to pay for the electrical connection. She obtained a water tap inside the room after paying a fee.

Lucy's whole life has been spent in this room. Her mother left their village near Nasik after separating from Lucy's father and came with her son to the slum. Lucy was born in the room her mother bought for Rs 150. The mother supported the two children by doing domestic work. Lucy attended a municipal school in the area. When she was in the 5th standard, her brother, who was working in the railways, was killed in a train accident. Lucy had to leave school and became a domestic servant.

Lucy's brother's widow and son remained with the family. The widow got a job in a local hospital, leaving the child in Lucy's care. She used to travel to and from work with a neighbor to whom she made advances. He rejected these and she retaliated by spreading the rumor that he was having an affair with Lucy. To squelch this rumor, he married Lucy, who was then sixteen. She did not like the idea, but accepted it as the only way out of a difficult situation. Her husband was employed as a peon in the railways. He died two years ago at the age of thirty-five of meningitis, a disease common to the slum. He left Lucy with four children ranging in age from 6 years to one month. For a while, she sold vegetables in the market to help support her children. She found it difficult, however, to manage this job and care for the children; she gave up the job.

Now that the children are slightly older, Lucy is desperately looking for a job, any job, she says. The Provident Fund she received after her husband's death was spent on the funeral and repayment of old debts. She now receives a pension of Rs 64 per month. This is supplemented by Rs 25 per month from Lucy's church. She has enclosed the small verandah in front of her room and rents it out for extra income.

A Muslim man from Uttar Pradesh lives with Lucy. He earns Rs 2-4 daily selling fruit. Lucy says that this is not a reliable source of income. She puts in the capital and he does the selling. He seems attached to Lucy and her children and



would marry her, but Lucy feels that it is not right for her, as a widow, to have any personal happiness.

Lucy cooks only one meal a day. She says she cannot afford more than that. She makes chapatis and occasionally lentils or a vegetable. Usually, though, the chapatis are eaten with tea. She and her children look underfed and wear badly tattered clothes. Her daughters, aged 6 and 8, help her cook and clean the utensils.

Lucy spends her whole day in the house. She has gone out of Bombay only twice in her life—once to Virar with her husband, and once to Nasik to visit her father. She has not been out socially since her husband's death. She likes films, but can't afford to see them. Sitting on the nearest suburban railway platform or at a nearby church seems to be her only recreational activity.

Lucy's neighbors treat her as a social outcast. Most mothers are reluctant to send their daughters to her house. They comment on her going out alone, and frown upon her relationship with the man she lives with. Once, recently, her daughter accidentally fell into a pot of boiling rice and ghee. The neighbors accused Lucy of trying to get rid of her children because her husband was dead. Lucy says this sadly and shrugs her frail shoulders.

Lucy mentions the expensive rates at the local flour mill and complains of rising prices as the major problems in the area. The common and over-crowded latrines also present a difficulty. She mentions frequent incidents of wife-beating in the slum and suggests that, rather than take such treatment, women should support themselves and their children on their own. She thinks that employment for women is inevitable for economic reasons, but says that they must be relieved of a part of their household work.

Lucy follows the crowd politically. She does not vote—"What is the use of voting? They don't do anything." She makes no comment on having a woman prime minister, except to say that it is acceptable for Mrs. Gandhi since her father was also prime minister. She reads of wars in the newspapers and fears that the wars may spread. This makes her feel insecure for herself and her children.

Educating her children seems to be Lucy's sole aspiration for the future. She laments her own lack of education, which hampers her employment prospects, and does not want her children to suffer the same fate. However, her meager income makes this a difficult task. Her eldest daughter, who had to discontinue school after her accident, has still not returned to school.

* * * * *

The stories of these three women reflect the various ways in which social and economic conditions and the attitudes they engender perpetuate sexual class. Janabai is representative here of the older generation of women raised in the village where feudal social relations still predominate. The complete absence of opportunity for development outside the wife-mother role, and the fact that she is a formed adult already fixed in that role have resulted in the relative continuity of her basic consciousness in the transition from

*the village to the urban slum. She relies on myth and religious* doctrine to explain the events of her life. It was to her, undeniably, the snake who evicted them from the village rather than the probable poverty of the small peasant. And her concept of their son as the reincarnation of the paternal head of the feudal family clearly indicates the extent to which she depends on that framework for her own behavior. This utter subjection to the male will is reiterated in her political consciousness, which places Mrs. Gandhi at the head of the larger "family" not as a woman, but as the paternal image to which one looks for security—"She hasn't given my sons jobs."

Thus, Janabai unselfconsciously acts out a definite role in the social mechanism which represses women. Thoroughly repressed herself, she has not the ability to think or act otherwise. She becomes the guardian of the family, on behalf of the man, compelling the daughter-in-law to conform to the existing structure And if the daughter-in-law doesn't cooperate, then Janabai calls on the man to use physical force. The mother-in-law is thus used as one of the most effective methods of enforcing conformity and stifling any rebellion from the woman.

If Janabai is a part of the problem, Shevanti is a part of the solution. She is a remarkably independent and outspoken young woman and has waged a consistent struggle in her own life against the forces oppressing her. Her rejection of an unsatisfying job as a domestic servant, despite her precarious economic status, speaks loudly for the strength of her intolerance of injustice.

Shevanti sees education and knowledge of vocational skills for women not just as an economic necessity, but as a prerequisite to an independent life. She seems able to do without marriage as necessary for establishing her identity as an individual. She firmly asserts that so long as she is supporting herself there is no justifiable reason to marry except by her own desire. This is of course made possible by her parents' continued willingness to provide a basic security in housing and emotional support.

Shevanti consciously resents the restrictions imposed on her personal freedom by neighborhood gossip. As an individual, she cannot yet defy these social attitudes. Her political consciousness indicates an awareness of the community as a motive force in political action. The total absence of Janabai's paternal framework here and Shevanti's consciousness of the necessity of struggle mark her as an asset to her sexual class.

The widow, Lucy, is one of the pathetic figures who have suffered so badly from sexual oppression and who stand to gain so much from the women's movement. The circumstances of her life have been decreed by powers beyond her control. Her marriage was thrust upon her—she had no options short of defying a whole society. In private conversation, Lucy confessed that her relationship with her husband had been miserable because he felt no love for her and even blamed her for a marriage he hadn't wanted. He gave no help at all with the household chores or the children. The success of sexual class oppression is seen in the fact that his

death, rather than releasing her, completely sealed her doom.

Lucy has had to confront alone the depressing fact of her own inability to provide for her children. Any possibility of employment, which could provide an opportunity for her to maintain some sense of integrity as an individual, is denied by her lack of education and the dependence of the children on her care. The man Lucy is living with, rather than offering a healthy sexual relationship, only serves as a constant reminder that she is not entitled, as a widow, to any personal happiness.

Despite the fact that Lucy puts up with her life as it is, hers is not a conservative consciousness. The very recognition of her own insecurity and helplessness implies a potential receptiveness to change. Her resentment of the neighbors' gossip and her restricted social life underline a deeply rooted discontentment.

This feeling is shared by many women in the slum where the rigid feudal attitudes of the village are being slowly eroded. It is a common thing for a husband to desert his wife to live with another woman, often younger or more attractive, with or without legal sanction. And the women complain bitterly of the insecurity this imposes on them. The husband may refuse to support the wife and children and the woman has no recourse to conscience or law. This is due to sheer ignorance in some cases, to the bias of the law itself in others, and to the inaccessibility of the poor to the courts. But, more importantly, the woman's lack of consciousness of rights which should be hers prevents her from acting on her own behalf. This repressed self-image of the woman is not easily relieved.

It is reinforced in village and town by the social environment, while the necessities of the economic struggle for survival are used as an excuse by which the woman is forced to repress her own discontent or to channel her frustrations into the accepted outlet—the tyranny of the mother-in-law. This excuse of economic priorities is increasingly resorted to as a means of defusing legitimate protest from women. It is true, of course, that women are denied education and employment as part and parcel of their economic class status. And equally true that men suffer from a similar discrimination. But the further oppression of sexual class perpetrated on women is relegated to the backs of our minds as having to await the advancement of the economic struggle.

If women were able to voice their oppression, the brunt of their attack would necessarily fall on the feudal family relationships and social attitudes which keep women tied to particular patterns of behavior. And the bitterness of centuries could make such an attack forceful enough to seriously undermine the institutions which create mothers-in-law like Janabai and men like her son. But the system and the men who rule it cannot afford to take such a risk, for it is these very institutions upon which the continued survival of economic exploitation relies to absorb the enormous cost of maintaining and reproducing the laboring classes. Women are needed, by the system, as unpaid workers to perform the labor required to cook the man's food, wash his clothes, clean his house, raise his children and keep him sexually satisfied. These functions serve to release the man's energy for his exploited labor in field or factory. The frustrations of the man because of the nature of his own labor and its inadequate compensation are, in turn, taken out in the family. The woman thus bears the brunt of his anger as well as the stifling conditions of her own existence, an existence which unhappily depends on the family for whatever meager economic and emotional security it provides. There is nowhere else to turn, and the woman cannot as an individual attack the man, the family relationships or the social framework without threatening her own existence.

The sexual and the economic struggles have therefore to be simultaneous, as the one injustice relies upon and reinforces the other. We must challenge the notion that women must await some further development in the economic class struggle. There is no reason why women should not be encouraged to voice their resentment, to identify their oppressors and to struggle to improve their condition. Their energies must be devoted to a thorough analysis of the specific nature of their problems, as well as to a program of drawing out women to express their long-repressed frustration.

Women will necessarily have to confront the opposition and intransigence of men, as the oppressing sexual class and as individuals. It is in the day-to-day struggle with the man that the most fierce resistance will be met. Attitudes cannot easily be changed, nor can the fruition of women's emancipation be achieved independently of a social and economic transformation. It is therefore necessary to recognize the man not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as a force to be tactically resisted and strategically transformed.

The development of the consciousness of women as a sexual class can shape a new perspective for women in India. And the potential released thereby can have an exciting effect on the struggle to create a new society.

# Indian Women and Leadership

by *Maria Mies*

## I. The Apparent Paradox

To talk about women in the context of leadership[1] must appear rather paradoxical, at least within academic sociology. Most studies of leadership start from the perspective of elites, and while research on women as a group may fit into various theoretical frameworks, it does not fit into elite theory.

Few societies are known where the patriarchal structure of family and society has given rise to such oppressive norms and institutions regarding women, and where this oppression has been so perfectly internalized by the women themselves, as Indian society. Although the excesses of women's slavery – *sati* (burning of widows), child-marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, *purdah* etc – have been legally abolished, the attitudes, as well as the actual behavior of the majority of Indian men and women, are still largely determined by these norms, which are summarized in the ideal of the *pativrata,* the husband-worshipping wife.[2] Practically all the role conflicts of educated working women in India are caused by the still prevailing patriarchal family structure and its congruent ideology of female submissiveness and the priority of women's role as housewife and mother.[3]

However, the paradox exists before our eyes: this extremely patriarchal country is ruled by a woman. Indira Gandhi is today undoubtedly the most powerful woman in the world – not only in terms of the number of people she is responsible for, but also in terms of the number of votes she was able to get at the last elections.[4] Yet it would be totally wrong, as sometimes is done, to see in the rise of Indira Gandhi to power an indication of the emancipation of Indian women. It would be equally wrong to simply brush aside this phenomenon as totally unique – a simple exception in the overall position of male dominance in modern societies. Empirical evidence shows that it is not Indira Gandhi alone who was able to rise to an important position. The number of women in leading positions in politics, business, administration and in education is comparatively larger in India than in the so-called advanced countries of the West and certainly in my own country, West Germany. What is more revealing, women in leading positions in India do not have to face the same aggressiveness and resentment of their male colleagues which is notorious in Western societies. Indian men do not immediately suffer from an inferiority complex when they have to work "under" a woman.[5]

The percentage of working women in India is not markedly smaller than in Western societies. According to the Census of India 1961, 28% of the female population was working. Women constitute 32% of the total labor force. In the U.S.A. this percentage was 32.07 in 1960, in Great Britain 30.8 (1951), in Sweden 27.36 (1961), West Germany 36.72 (1961), U.S.S.R. 45.00 (1955).[6] Yet the bulk of these women (86% according to the 1961 Census) work in the agricultural sector, whereas the proportion of women in the secondary and tertiary sectors is much smaller and steadily decreasing.[7]

However, the fact that the proportion of working women in India is not significantly smaller than in Western societies, and that in comparison with the total female population a microscopic minority of women has risen to influential positions, and that this minority is not much smaller than in the advanced countries, does not speak for the emancipation of Indian women but for the backwardness of both Indian and Western societies.

I agree with the Marxists who say that the advancement of certain middle-class women does not in the least end the oppression of working-class women or poor peasant women as such. It has become very clear in the course of the last two years that Indira Gandhi, who won the last elections with the slogan "garibi hatao" (away with poverty), is not able or willing to rescue her downtrodden sisters from the clutches of poverty and exploitation by landlords, moneylenders or the big capitalists in the cities. Indira Gandhi is the leader of her class and not a leader of women. It seems that an ever-growing number of women of the poor are beginning to understand this truth. The growing economic crisis, rising prices, hoarding and blackmarketeering, food adulteration, and corruption which thrives on the poverty of the people – thus creating a man-made famine on top of the natural calamities, shortages or sheer absence of the barest necessities of life – have resulted in widespread strikes and demonstrations. In all these agitations women of the lower classes play an active and militant role.

Yet, the above-mentioned contradiction cannot be explained away by saying that only a handful of middle-class women, due to their class background, have been able to break the sex barriers of patriarchal society and function as "alibi-women." The striking contradiction between theory and practice, between social norms and actual behavior, the paradox that women do play a prominent role in a patriarchal society, has hardly roused the interest of social scientists. This is not only a symptom of male ethnocentrism in academic sociology, but hints at more profound limitations of positivist academic sociology. Women, in general, are part of what Robert Redfield and McKim Marriott call "the little tradition." To them, and to Indian women in particular, applies the saying of Bertold Brecht: "One does not see those who are in the dark." The instruments used by academic,

positivist sociology to probe into this darkness were invented to study Western societies from the viewpoint of the dominant class. These instruments – theoretical concepts, categories, and research methods – have been declared to be *universal, objective,* and *value-free.* When applied to "little traditions," to lower-class or sub-cultural groups in the advanced societies, or to colonial and neo-colonial societies, or to women, these instruments are bound to uncover only the expected behavior, that is, a verbalization of the norms of the dominant culture, not actual behavior.[8]

Having said that much, I need not declare that my approach to the question of leadership does not start from a universalistic, value-free point of view but is deliberately subjective and partial. This means a mere description of leadership of women does not suffice. It must be asked whom this leadership serves.

## II. Leadership for What?

This question is rarely asked by positivist sociologists studying elites and leadership. Following Max Weber's analysis of the ideal types of charismatic, traditional and rational or bureaucratic dominance, the concept of leadership is considered to be a universal one, applicable to all situations and social constellations alike. This is the reason why it is possible to use the same concept for the study of small groups and the family, as well as for phenomena on the macro-sociological level, as is being done in leadership seminars for the most divergent groups such as businessmen and managers, army officers, social workers, and functionaries of trade unions and political parties, even radical ones.

The common denominator for these various types of leaders and leadership is the hierarchical structure of the organizations or institutions they are connected with and the vertical interaction process that takes place between those who lead and those who are led. It is based on the assumption that the "masses" or the "people" are ignorant and passive and that there would be chaos without leaders who "know" and are "active." The aim of this elitist concept of leadership is usually not explicitly stated. It is either the stabilization of the status quo and old power elites, or their replacement by a new power elite.

This is not the time to develop a more fundamental criticism of this concept of leadership, but women and other oppressed social groups or classes must ask the question: does this concept of leadership serve the cause of their liberation?

It must be admitted that this question has hardly begun to be asked by any women's movement so far. When women began to struggle for equal rights and emancipation in the 19th century, they either adopted the concepts of organization and leadership evolved by the dominant political organizations or their movement was integrated into movements led by men, where women's interests had to be subordinated to some greater cause.[9] The Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s is the first to be aware of the problem that the dominant male culture does not allow women to define their own cause and develop their autonomous concept of leadership and organization.[10]

If we apply these considerations to the Indian scene we find that the same mechanisms are at work, both in specific women's organizations and in other organizations where women have a leading position. The organizational structure of the All India Women's Conference is as bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralized as that of any other bureaucracy. Even where women have achieved a leading position in politics, business, administration and education they have to adopt a bureaucratic style of leadership, though this is softened in India with the touch of being looked upon as a mother or an older sister. But the fact that women cannot define their own interests in these organizations and institutions, nor evolve an adequate concept of leadership with regard to these interests, has put them into the straight jacket of an authoritarian bureaucratic structure. Many of them have become as sterile, dull, unimaginative and legalistic as any male functionary.

## III. The Bourgeois Concept of Leadership of Women in India

Some Indian women have claimed that they do not need a women's liberation movement because they have already been offered emancipation on a silver platter by Indian men. This startling position – and the explanation for the *alienation of Indian women in leading positions from their true interests* – is most likely due to the fact that these women share the privileges of the ruling elite, and that they have been indoctrinated, like most Indians, in the dominant patriarchal-bourgeois ideology of the so-called "Indian Ideal of Womanhood" as it was propagated during the Freedom Struggle and in post-independence India.

It was Gandhi above all who was responsible for the creation of a new myth of Indian womanhood. He was fully aware of the unrest and revolutionary potential among the masses of oppressed Indian women. The Freedom Movement, from its beginning in the 19th century, had been closely connected with the cause of the uplift of women and the abolition of social evils. child marriage, discrimination against widows, *sati, purdah.* Practically all reform movements and national movements had advocated women's education. Gandhi was not only able to identify with the enslaved women but also to channel their rebellion into his non-violent, anti-colonial struggle. The post-independence concept of women's role in family and society was greatly influenced by Gandhian ideology. It found its expression in the marriage reforms, family law, labor policy and above all educational policy. Schools, official mass media, and women's organizations propagated this "Ideal of Indian Womanhood." Women leaders who emerged in that period usually fitted into this pattern, therefore it is necessary to give a short description of this new myth, which combined the female virtues which orthodox Hinduism had preached for several thousand years with certain qualities of the modern woman. Gandhi revived the great figures of the Indian epics, the Mahabharata and above all, the Ramayana. It has been of great consequence for the public role of women in post-independence India that Gandhi chose Sita, the monogamous, chaste, self-sacrificing spouse of Rama, as his ideal woman and not Draupadi, the strong-willed, passionate, revengeful, polyandrous wife of the five Pandavas of the Mahabharata. Even today, every little school-girl and school-boy learns that Sita is the ideal woman and Rama the ideal man.

Gandhi admired Sita's chastity and purity, which she preserved even in the clutches of Ravana, the demon king. When several Congress women complained about molestation

by men, Gandhi advised them to follow the example of Sita. He believed firmly that a woman could find sufficient strength in her own purity to resist even the physical violence of men.[11] Gandhi was full of praise for Sita because she never complained about ill-treatment or injustice. In this faculty of silent suffering and self-sacrifice he saw one of the strongest features of Indian women which made them ideal partners in his nonviolent campaign. He believed that women *by nature* are more non-violent than men. In 1938 he wrote, "I do believe that it is woman's mission to exhibit *ahimsa* [non-violence] at its highest and its best . . . for woman is more fitted than man to make *ahimsa* For the courage of self-sacrificing woman is any day superior to man, as I believe man is to woman for the courage of the brute."[12]

Apart from *ahimsa* and self-sacrifice Gandhi allotted to women the role of spiritualization of the so-called animal instincts, above all the sexual desires. According to the Sita-Rama model, the husband is not only a man but also the first God of the woman. Rama is not only a prince but also an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Therefore the wife's relationship to her husband is one of worship, a spiritual one. The highest aim of marriage, according to Gandhi, is spiritual maturation. Then follow: service to the society, duties toward the family and ancestors, and lastly mutual attraction between husband and wife.[13]

Since woman has to purify the brute passions in marriage, her coming out into the field of politics, education and economics will have a civilizing effect: "Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should, therefore, result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property."[14] Gandhi theoretically advocated equality and economic independence for women, but he advised them not to practice these rights because they belonged to the "brute nature" of man.

Possibly Gandhi himself was not aware that his concept of womanhood was not only the revivalistic version of one prototype of the orthodox *Hindu* (not Indian) ideology of women, namely the ascetic, puritan, brahmanical tradition, but was, in fact, a mixture of the *patrivata* ideal of the husband-worshipping wife with the bourgeois Victorian ideal of the "clinging vine." Neither the hard-working woman of the industrial proletariat nor the toiling lower-caste or Untouchable peasant woman fitted into the Sita model. In these communities patriarchal institutions of the higher castes – monogamy, dowry, *purdah* – were partly unknown, but Gandhi, as most of the Western educated elite, was horrified at the "barbarous" institutions of the so-called backward communities [15] The moral superiority of the orthodox Hindu institutions was taken for granted, because even the "advanced" Western societies had the same patriarchal institutions.[16]

Though Gandhi was able to mobilize large numbers of women to participate in the national struggle, it is evident that only women of the well-to-do classes, with a good education, well-placed husbands, and servants could satisfactorily perform the double role, implied in the Sita model, of service to the family and service to the nation. Most of the women leaders of that time came from feudal or bourgeois families – for example, the women of the Nehru family, of the Tagore family, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Kamla Devi Chattopadhya, to mention only a few.

For all these women, service to the society was a voluntary activity, not an economic necessity. It did not come in the way of their family roles. This situation has not changed significantly since independence. Women who have risen to leading positions could usually do so because of their family background. In my interviews with such women I found that most of them give priority to their family roles and are ready to give up their career if their husband should ask them to do so. Theoretically they often subscribe to the "Indian Ideal of Womanhood" though in practice they may deviate from it. The role conflict of the professional woman does not become manifest in their cases because they have enough servants for household work and their husbands earn enough so that the family does not depend on the wife's income, and in the style of their behavior, dress, make-up, way of dealing with men etc., these women are very careful not to go against the accepted norms of the society.[17] In fact, I consider this the secret of the success of middle-class women leaders in India: they never frontally attack the official ideology of women, i.e. the emphasis on service to the family as her primary task and service to the society as secondary. By stating their loyalty to parents and husbands they often secure a broad margin of deviation from the dominant norms in their behavior, thus manipulating the situation according to their will and gaining power and influence. Yet when questioned they will put husband and family first.[18]

Voluntary service, self-sacrifice, and dedication were the qualities which were demanded from women leaders according to Gandhian ideology. This concept changed in the era of Mrs. Indira Gandhi when a new technocratic elite came to the forefront. The role of women in society, particularly their role as leaders, was reinterpreted. According to a study by the YWCA on *The Educated Women in Indian Society Today*,[19] the Gandhian ideal of voluntary service and dedication without remuneration is being replaced by the idea of professional leadership. The new concept calls all women with a first degree between the ages of 20 and 58 years "potential leaders,"[20] which means that the recruitment of leaders has been extended to the lower layers of the middle class.

The qualities demanded of these new leaders are those of the bureaucratic ideal type. First of all, leadership should become a *profession* Professionalization is however based on a system of incentives and rewards and on specialized training. Therefore all training for leadership implies training for expertise and "a professional attitude toward learning and living."[21] This attitude is common among middle-aged educated women. According to the authors this group "is not by nature deeply sacrificial, would like to know what it gets out of an investment in training and service, and generally takes a rational and balanced view of work within the larger contour of life." It is "equipped to work, is aware of the need for continuing responsibility, enjoys a sense of achievement, lives up to its status . . . is disciplined and can be depended upon to honor its contract of service."[22]

No doubt these qualities do not make for outstanding, innovative leaders but for reliable bureaucrats. But women, according to this new view, are not meant to aspire to such heights. The authors admit: "Many of this group are competent material [sic!] for administration, though they rarely make creative administrators . . . Their power to lead can be exercised well within small groups that have the same

idiom of service and do not demand unorthodoxy of idea and conduct."[23] This mass of middle-level women leaders is, however, nationally productive and must be trained and motivated. It is not surprising that this apparently new concept of women's leadership fits exactly into the old structures of the typical women's professions. The new elite of professional women is encouraged to enter the fields of teaching, social work, medicine and above all nursing, where there is a chronic shortage of applicants. But they are not asked to compete with men for the prestige professions: business, science, politics and higher education.

Though the authors do not hesitate to call the change in the concept of leadership by Indian women of the seventies a "radical" or even a "revolutionary" one, it is obvious that only a technocratic cloak is being put on the Gandhian ideal. Both concepts are based on woman's readiness to "serve without vanity, to construct anonymously,"[24] in other words, to suppress her own interests and do alienated work.

This new concept must be seen in the background of the new period of capitalist development in India. In this period a large mass of formally educated men and women are available who are ready to do work below their formal qualifications and who would do it better than the uneducated. From this reservoir of educated unemployed it is possible to select, by the mechanisms of competition and v ertical division of labor, the actual elite: "The idea is to build up a stream of competent leaders, out of these the outstanding will emerge."[25] Obviously, masses of so-called women leaders are required to do service jobs in the badly paid reproductive sphere – in education, health and social service and in the family where the capitalist individual is reproduced and the most outstanding failures of the system repaired.

If we return to our basic question: "Leadership for what?" it is evident that neither the Gandhian concept of selfless service and dedication nor the new functional-bureaucratic model of professional leadership is able to promote the cause of women's liberation, since in both cases woman is not the subject in the whole process.

## IV. Women and Revolt

### (a) Radical Women in the Independence Movement

By idealizing women with regard to *ahimsa*, selflessness and spirituality, Gandhi was able to co-opt the tremendous mobilization and politicization of large masses of Indian women who took part in public activities for the first time

during the Freedom Movement. However, if one looks more closely at the performance of many women during this period, one finds that a great number did not fit into the non-violent Sita model, but advocated a radical and, if necessary, violent revolution. Not only that, they actively took part in militant, subversive actions.

From 1900 onwards, particularly from the time of the partition of Bengal in 1905, an ever-growing number of Indian women saw the cause of their liberation as an oppressed sex closely connected with the struggle against colonial rule. The most outstanding women of that time belonged to the radical or revolutionary camp. It is doubtful whether the revolutionaries of that era had heard anything of Marxism, but they had a clear understanding of the mechanisms of imperialism, thus they were not satisfied with political rights but asked for economic independence as well.

There were above all four women in the radical camp who rose as leaders on a national level between 1900 and 1919: Sister Nivedita (alias Margaret Noble), Sarla Devi, the niece of Rabindranath Tagore, Madam Bhikaiji Rustum K. R. Cama, and Annie Besant.

Sister Nivedita had come to India from Ireland as a disciple of Vivekananda. But after her Guru's death she threw herself wholeheartedly into the political struggle of the day. She is said to have had links with the Irish Revolutionary Party and with the National Revolutionary Council of which Sri Aurobindo was a member. During the Bengal famine of 1906 she had seen the suffering of the rural masses and understood that natural calamities were not its only causes: "Under Western Imperialism the methods of exploitation are different from the past. The subjection has become financial and growing exploitation proceeds along building railroads, the destruction of native industries and the creation of widespread famine."[26]

In speeches and pamphlets she attacked British imperialism and roused the nationalist feelings of the younger generation. She did not believe in an elitist approach towards revolution but was convinced that the Indian peasant masses would have enough common sense to take matters into their own hands. Her main contribution to the movement was her insistence on action and militant agitation. In 1907 she wrote, "As long as India is contented to sit and argue the question she is perhaps but worldly wise to take what she can and refuse concession. Argument is never dangerous. But if a day should come when she ceased to argue? If she suddenly declared that she cared nothing about theory, for three hundred millions of human beings had determined on a new arrangement? Not our *right* but our *will*. If this cry were heard through the land what could be said by the tax collectors then? What then? What then?" When she died in 1911, Rash Behari Ghose said at a memorial meeting, "When the dry bones are beginning to stir, it is because Sister Nivedita breathed the breath of life into them!"[27]

Sarla Devi was greatly influenced by B. G. Tilak and his militant revivalism which combined nationalist and religious elements. Much in the same way as Tilak had made the Ganpati festival in Maharashtra the focus of agitation, Sarla Devi used the cult of Kali in Bengal to rouse the nationalist spirit among the *bhadralok*, the elite youth. She was not satisfied with her work as an editor of *Bharati* and later as a supervisor of the *Hindustan Press*. In 1905 she changed a philanthropic association, the "Suhrid Samiti," into a political and paramilitary organization where young members were trained in religious ceremonies, speeches, songs, and literature as well as physical training in boxing, wrestling, drills and exercises with sword, dagger, sticks and modern firearms. Sarla Devi was their leader.

Whereas the ideological orientation of Devi was that of a fervent nationalist, Madam Cama, a Parsee woman from Bombay, was a socialist revolutionary who carried out a tireless campaign against imperialism from London, Paris and Berlin. In speeches, pamphlets, and later in her own paper, *Bande Mataram*, which appeared in Paris, she tried to draw the attention of European socialists and nationalists to the Asian and African scene. She supplied money, subversive literature and weapons to the Indian revolutionaries.

More than any other woman, Annie Besant led the freedom movement from its passive phase of drafting resolutions and petitions to become an active mass movement. Like Nivedita, she came to the public scene only late in her life, after a phase of intensive educational work for the renaissance of Hinduism. In 1914 she joined the radical wing of the Indian National Congress and, together with Tilak, founded the Home Rule League, whose only aim was the attainment of self-government. She issued her own paper, *The New India*, from Madras and traveled from south to north to address mass meetings. Like Tilak, Sarla Devi and Nivedita, she deliberately introduced the religious element into political agitation, seeing it as the safest means to mobilize the masses and at the same time to strike at the liberal English government with its policy of non-interference in religious matters.

When she was finally arrested in 1917, a wave of protest swept the country and even England and the USA. Under the strong pressure of agitation she finally had to be released and was immediately elected President of the 1917 National Congress—the first time a woman had occupied this post. When Gandhi entered the political scene and demanded not only Home Rule and dominion status for India but if necessary a break with Britain, she turned against him and immediately lost much sympathy. Some of her friends, however, said that Gandhi only extended and intensified her program, including her methods of civil resistance.[28]

These women were successful as leaders precisely because of characteristics not found in the Sita model. They had a great appeal to the masses, particularly to youth and women, because they emotionalized the Freedom Struggle by their passionate call for action. They all appealed to religious feelings, either by a direct revivalistic effort to restore the dignity of the Indian past, or the people themselves looked up to them as reincarnations of the Mother-Goddess. Secondly, these women were above all *leaders of political actions*. Though they were well educated and had a broad theoretical knowledge which they used as journalists and orators, they all emphasized the need for militant action in contrast to argument and the legalistic approach. Therefore they did not waste their time with theoretical questions on the violent or non-violent nature of the Indian revolution but stressed the need of active resistance against tyranny and subjection.

The radical women of the period between 1905 and 1919 had no consistent revolutionary or socialist ideology which guided their actions. This changed after 1920 when news of the Russian Revolution spread to India and Marxist literature became known. Punjab and Bengal became centers

of communist activities which sought to end not only British rule but also the exploitation of the Indian working class and peasants by their own countrymen. Women took part in underground and terrorist movements in Punjab, Bengal and Assam.

In Punjab, college girls supported Bhagat Singh and the Ghadar Party at the time of the Lahore Conspiracy Case.[29] In Bengal young women, mostly students, took an active part in terrorist activities, led raids on police stations and government clubs, and were involved in the Armoury Raid of Chittagong in 1930. The best known of these revolutionary women were Bina Das, Kalpana Dutta, Suniti, Samiti and Pratilata Waddedar, who lost her life in action. Bina Das shot at the governor at the convocation of Calcutta University. Kalpana Datta was an active party worker, was jailed in connection with the Chittagong raid, and later worked together with the peasant leagues and workers' union.[30]

The women's revolt in Assam seems to have had more of a mass character due to police repression. Some observers remark, "The struggle waged in Assam to break down the shackles of slavery is largely a struggle for Assam's womanhood."[31] Thousands of women came out of their homes and marched under the guidance of teen-age girls or old women to the police stations or other places where they could confront the government. In 1942, 10,000 women of Bajali came in a procession to the police station and occupied it. They sang songs and requested the officials to resign from their posts. Many women were put in jail or killed during these actions.

### (b) Women in Recent Revolutionary Movements

The early radical women leaders came from high-caste, well-to-do and educated strata of society. Working-class and peasant women no doubt participated in the various militant movements, particularly in the Kisan Sabhas (peasant leagues) in Bihar and Bengal and between 1946-51 in the Telengana armed struggle,[32] but little is known about their role as organizers and leaders. In underground movements women usually gave cover and shelter to the revolutionaries, served as liaison between the various groups and kept up the production of food.

This was also the main contribution of women in the Naxalite movement between 1967 and 1970. Yet the tradition of women taking leading parts in direct action was revived in Kerala and West Bengal. In Kerala, Ajitha Narayan, the 16-year-old daughter of Kunikkal Narayan, won fame as the leader of an action group. Her father, one of the leaders of the Kerala Committee of the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries—a temporary loose organization of all radicals who had left the CPI(M)—withdrew into the hills with his wife and daughter. There they mobilized the peasants. Ajitha led raids on two police stations in Tellichery. Some policemen were killed, others driven out and the stations destroyed. Later Ajitha was arrested with her father and mother. She has recently been sentenced to long imprisonment. Her father was released on bail. Many people came to see her, full of admiration for this young girl who had had the courage to fight the class enemy directly.

In West Bengal, Jayasree Rana, the wife of Santosh Rana, became known as a leader in the Naxalite movement. With her husband she mobilized the peasants in Debra-Gopiballabhpur of Midnapur district, which was called a liberated area for some time. When repression started, the movement died out. Later Santosh Rana was arrested; Jayasree was not. Today she is the secretary of the Legal Aid Committee in Calcutta, an organization which tries to help the tens of thousands of political prisoners who are detained indefinitely —mostly without trial—in Indian jails. A fair number of these prisoners are women, subjected to the same brutal tortures as the men. This was confirmed recently even by members of the All India Women's Association.[33]

That even peasant women can become a driving force and assume a leading role in agrarian revolt was proven in the last two years by landless and poor peasant women in Maharashtra. In 1972-73 Maharashtra experienced one of the worst famines in a hundred years. In a number of districts there was practically no rainfall at all. An estimated 20 million of the 50 million inhabitants were affected by famine, yet the government organized famine relief work for only four-and-a-half million landless and poor peasants. This happened rather late and only after heavy pressure of mass protests, demonstrations and "gheraos."[34] Failure of the government to establish relief work, delay of wage payments due to corruption, rising prices and non-availability of grain, sugar, sweet oil, and kerosene, and growing harassment of the poor by the rich peasants and the police resulted in widespread peasant upheavals throughout the country.

For the organizers of these militant agitations it came as a surprise that the women not only often took the lead in demonstrations but were much more militant and adamant with regard to their demands than the men. When the women "gheraoed" a government official they would not budge an inch till he had given in to their demands. The most outstanding fact, however, is that these illiterate poor women have clearly understood the true cause of their misery and even of the famine. They know that they are starving because they are exploited by the high caste rich peasants who, with the moneylenders, the government officials and the police, form one and the same class. They also know that the present government, though it promised to eliminate poverty, is doing nothing to defend the poor against the exploitation of the rich because it represents that same class. This became evident to me when I visited Shahada in the Dhulia district in northwest Maharashtra last summer, at a time when peasants were agitating for the continuation of the relief work which guaranteed them at least a daily income. The government had stopped the famine relief work from September 15 although the landless laborers had not been given work by the rich peasants. In several villages of day laborers, people had not had any food or work for several days. The women in these villages were the most outspoken in expressing their anger against the government of Indira Gandhi.

How is it possible that illiterate, untouchable (Harijan) and tribal (Adivasi) women take the lead in the agrarian class struggle? To answer this question it is necessary to give a brief account of the situation in this district.[35]

Shahada and Taloda *talukas* (subdivisions of districts)—the center of the present movement in Dhulia district—have 40 and 75 percent respectively Adivasi population, 50-60 percent of whom are landless laborers. The fertile "black cotton" soil, excellent for sugar cane production, is 70-80 percent monopolized by the high-caste Gujars who constitute only 10-20 percent of the population. Originally owned by the Adivasis, it has been gradually but systematically expropriated

## QUESTIONS OF A WOMAN AGRICULTURAL LABORER

*by Bhaskar Jadhav*

*Chorus:* All our life is on fire, all the prices rising,
Give us an answer, O rulers of the country!

A handful of American wheat, a kilo of milo mixed with chaff,
Doeesn't our country grow crops
Or do we have only mud-mixed grain? Give us an answer . . .

We have forgotten the color of milk,
Coconuts and dried fruits have gone underground,
Our children have only jaggery tea for nourishment. Give us an answer . . .

Sweet oil for cooking is the price of gold,
Coconut oil for our hair is not to be found,
Without rock oil for lamps we have grown familiar with darkness.

We burn in the summer, we are drenched in the rains,
We bear the rigor of winter without any clothes,
Why don't we yet have any shelter? Give us an answer . . .

We toil day and night and sleep half-starved
While the parasites fill their bellies with butter,
Why does the thief get nourishment while the owner is cheated?

There are pastures for the cattle of the rich,
For forest development land is preserved,
Why is there no land to support living men? Give us an answer . .

Tall buildings rise before our eyes,
The roads cannot contain these motorcycles and cars,
On whose labor has such development been built? Give us an answer . . .

We filled the jails for independence,
We hurled bombs into the cars of the white men,
Did we do it to fatten the sacred cow? Give us an answer . . .

When we ask for a rise in wages, for work for the unemployed,
When we demand land for cultivation,
Why are we met with jail, beatings and bullets? Give us an answer . . .

Now you have taken a new disguise
And appear in the colors of socialism,
But we no longer want for today the promises of tomorrow! Give us an answer

Now we will stand on our own feet,
We will throw caste and religious differences to the winds,
We call for the brotherhood and sisterhood of all toilers!

We vow today to fight with our lives,
We will bury capitalism in the grave
And sound the drums of our state!

## THE BLOOD-COLOURED RED FLAG

*By Amar Sheikh*

There is no grain in the sifter,
My child is starving in the house,
My husband is toiling in the woods,
My memories are of starvation—
The red flag, the blood-colored red flag.

My Raghu goes to school,
He has no shirt for his body,
His body gets baked like a popcorn in the sun,
Giving the call comes the flag, the blood-colored red flag.

The rich have all the power,
Their ways are alien to the rest of the world,
They grind up the common man to death,
The red flag will overthrow such power,
the blood-colored red flag.

Rise, woman, the dawn has come,
The cock has just crowed,
The sun with its pink rose also says
Take in your hand the red flag, the blood-colored red flag.

The children of peasants have risen,
They have gone to Bombay
And died toiling in the mills
Until to survive they take in their hands
The red flag, the blood-colored red flag.

The rich and the government
Together have decided to beat up the poor,
So peasant woman, take in your hand the red flag,
the blood-colored red flag.

Now we will no longer tolerate injustice,
Why should we be starving?
Why should we listen to abuse?
The red flag teaches us to be like the tigress,
the blood-colored red flag.

Whatever remains will also go,
So why do you worry now?
If you join hands in unity
The red flag will accompany you to battle,
the blood-colored red flag.

Throw away the false hopes in your mind,
Take the gun of unity in your hand,
Beat up the tyrannical rich,
Take in procession the red flag,
the blood-colored red flag.

## HEY, INDIRA!

*by Dongar Javre ("Javre of the Hills")*

*Chorus:*
We have an invitation for you, to see what will happen to us now,
Indira, the chaos of inflation lies before us now, before us now . . .

Wheat and carrots, rice and jawar, see the prices rising, hey,
Oil and lentils, cloth and sugar, vegetables are rising, hey!
When simple food cannot be found, daily life to dust is ground, Indira,
the chaos of inflation lies before us now . . .

When I heard you call "abolish poverty," my heart was filled to bursting, hey,
Running, I voted for your symbol, the cow and calf nursing, hey,
When will your promises be fulfilled, when will happiness reach our homes,
Indira, the chaos of inflation lies before us now . . .

The rich are rolling on their sofas, luxuriously lounging, hey,
We are starving, half-exhausted, bitterness abounding, hey,
If you have any love, let it flow out, take a look and think about it,
Indira, the chaos of inflation lies before us now . . .

The landless now are organizing, building unity anew, hey!
If capitalism is not destroyed, we'll see that it's your funeral too, hey!
All now say, no more can we stand--then take revolution's flag in hand,
Indira, the chaos of inflation lies before us now . .

The poet Javre is our brother, we listen to his urging, hey,
We'll take to battle for our rights, we will bury our enemy, hey!
Truly, truly, the time is at hand, act at once with careful command,
Indira, the chaos of inflation lies before us now, before us now,
The chaos of inflation lies before us now!

*translated by Gail Omvedt*

by the Gujars who migrated here in the course of the last hundred years. The Green Revolution has accelerated this process. The fertile land has become important for cash-crop production, in crops like sugar cane or ground nuts, which promise quick and high profits.

In January 1972 a united front of Sarvodaya (Gandhian) workers, independent young radicals, the Maharashtra Landless Laborers and Poor Peasants Union (led by the Lal Nishan Party),[36] and the Bhil Adivasi Seva Mandal under the leadership of the late Ambarsingh "Maharaj," a popular Adivasi leader, was formed with the aim of organizing the Adivasis against the ruthless exploitation and harassment of the Gujar landlords. Before this Bhu-Mukti ("liberation of the land") conference in January, there had been a series of incidents and of Gujar and police atrocities against Adivasis, especially against Adivasi women who were insulted, beaten, raped, stripped naked and bound to the horses of the Gujars. The movement, after exhausting all legal avenues of protest, reached a new phase in its development in May 1971 when hundreds of starving people came to a rich landlord and village headman in Patilwadi to ask for grain. The headman first gave them 3 kg per head, but after they had left he sent the police after them, accusing them of having looted his granary. In the clash that followed one Adivasi was shot by the Gujars.[37] The Patilwadi incident was the beginning of the radicalization of the Adivasi movement which since has grown rapidly and passed through several stages resulting in the organization of landless laborers and poor peasants, including many peasant women.

The movement progressed from the initial attempt simply to recover Adivasi land in Gujar possession to the more general demands for more relief work, higher wages, emergency inflationary measures, control of corruption, and an end to police repression. The weekly protests culminated in May 1973 when six thousand people marched through the streets of Shahada. This procession, like many others, was led by women militants, who shouted anti-Gujar and anti-government slogans, sang revolutionary songs, agitated the masses and led them to more militant and bolder actions.[38] These illiterate women also took part in the negotiations with government officials. I was told that on such occasions the men sometimes were ready to give up the agitation when the government representative promised partial fulfillment; the women, however, usually insisted on a firm guarantee that all their demands would be met before ceasing the agitation.

Women also addressed the May Day rally in 1973 in Shahada. The organizers, particularly the young radicals from the towns, were surprised by the militancy of the peasant women. Perhaps it had not occurred to them that 50 percent or more of rural workers are women. When they called for a meeting of women they expected some 25, but 150 turned up. The activists did not know exactly what to say to them and asked what they thought their greatest problem was. The women answered—"liquor." The Adivasi and Harijan men, like most poor in India, brew their own bad liquor and spend the little money they earn in drinking and gambling. The women, who work as much as the men in the fields, get only 1-2 rupees a day (whereas the men get 2-3 rupees) and have to feed their children and families with their own meager income. The women also realized that drinking was a serious obstacle for the organization of the men. The men were often drunk when there were political meetings, they started quarreling with each other, thus undermining the peasants' solidarity. As soon as the women had discussed this problem they began to act. That very night, after the meeting, they marched to a village 12 miles away, where they knew that illicit liquor was being brewed. They smashed the stills and all the machinery and destroyed the liquor pots. Ambarsingh, who reported this story, said that there was almost complete prohibition in the area now as women keep a watch on the liquor business. Immediately afterwards the women started their own village committees as part of the Shramik Sanghatana. Now, as soon as a woman is harassed or insulted by a Gujar or a policeman or beaten by her husband, she goes to her committee and reports the incident. Then all the women of the village gather, go to the offender, make him kneel down before them and apologize, sometimes they even beat him. This, I was told, has brought the harassment of women, which is a notorious feature of the Adivasi and Harijan areas,[39] almost to an end in these talukas.

Another example of the organizational strength and militancy of the women was reported by one of the organizers. During the famine relief work the laborers often had to wait for their daily wages for weeks, which meant that in the evening they had no money to buy their daily meal. A group of Adivasi women marched into the office of the government official responsible for the distribution of wages and "gheraoed" him. He was furious and refused to talk to the illiterate women. Instead he tried to use a young man from the town (the activist who told me this story) to convince the women to leave his office. The latter refused to negotiate in place of the women and said they were able to speak for themselves. As the day went on, the officer asked for a glass of water. The women refused, saying that they too were thirsty and hungry since they had walked a long distance. As soon as he saw that they got their wages they would allow him to drink. The officer finally had to give in to the women.

The women are not only more militant and persevering than the men in this movement, they also seem to be more aware of the need for a mass organization. They go from hut to hut and urge the men to join the Shramik Sanghatana. If the men hesitate, they strip off their bracelets and put them on the men's wrists, which means that now the men play the role formerly ascribed to women, to sit in the house and be scared.

The most important means to spread the movement and class-consciousness among the landless and poor peasants are songs and slogans. These songs are made by local poets, some by the women. The tunes are taken from Marathi folk songs or Hindi film music. At every meeting and during marches and demonstrations these songs are sung. Usually it is a group of women or teenage girls who will start singing and shouting slogans. At the meeting five or six of them will huddle together, squatting on the ground and putting their heads together like timid girls and whisper a secret into each other's ear. Then they start their songs and the crowd will repeat every verse in chorus. They never tire of singing. When one song is over they simply start it again, thus hammering certain basic truths into the minds of their audience. If one looks at these revolutionary songs one cannot but be astonished at their clear analysis of the new type of agrarian capitalism, of the class structure in this area, and of the role of the government and foreign aid which came to them in the form of grain "meant for animals only." In the songs the Gujars are

attacked as having cheated them of their lands, their bullocks, even their ploughs, and of having monopolized the rural cooperative societies, thus appropriating all government funds for development. In one of their songs, the "Indira Song," Indira Gandhi is ridiculed because she is not able to implement her slogan "garibi hatao." The refrain of many of these songs is that now the poor are fed up with empty promises and will take things in their own hands. "The lion in the cage has woken up and now the day of revolution has come."[40]

The women are totally disillusioned with the present government, to which, most probably, they had given their votes in the last elections. They openly say that only by organizing, fighting and having a revolution will they be able to get food to fill their stomachs, oil for their hair, and clothes for themselves and their children. When asked about their specific exploitation as women, the fact that they get one rupee less than the men per day, they said this was unjust. "We do all the work the men do in the fields, on top of the work in the house. We must fight to get equal wages." And how will it be after the revolution? Will the men also work in the house? The women first laughed and said the men did not know how to look after the children. But then they discussed the matter among themselves and said, "Yes, the men should also share the household work."

## V. Peasant Women's Potential for Revolutionary Leadership

If one compares the women in the recent peasant uprisings in Maharashtra with the concept of middle- and upper-class women's leadership referred to above, a completely different picture of leadership emerges.

(1) The landless laborer and poor peasant women have a *clear class-consciousness* which has its objective base in the fact that they constitute about 50 percent of the rural labor force and are doubly exploited by the class of rich peasants. As laborers they share the exploitation of the men; as women they get lower wages and are insulted and harassed by the same class.

(2) There is no individual leadership but *collective leadership*. No individual women, no heroine or charismatic personality has emerged so far.[41] Young girls as well as old women are found in the forefront of the movement.

(3) The women have overcome the dichotomy between theory and practice. They are *action-oriented* and are no longer fooled by legalistic maneuvers and argument. As soon as they understand their situation and know what concrete steps to take, they act. This is, however, no blind activism or adventurism. In the beginning the women hesitated before they joined the movement. They calculate their risks rationally and act accordingly.

(4) They emphasize the need for *organization and solidarity* as the only source of their strength. The material base for this is the fact that the scope for individual bribery and promotion is much smaller in the case of the women, and this also holds for attempts to split their solidarity by individual rewards, the means by which the working class has always been fragmented. They have no "underdog" to whom they can delegate the repression from above.

(5) They are *not yet domesticated by the bourgeois "Indian Ideal of Womanhood"* and thus not integrated into the dominant class and its culture. They are, therefore, much freer with regard to what middle-class women consider to be decent behavior in women. They are not "protected women" and they do not need the protection of the "strong sex" as they are economically not dependent on their husbands, as most middle-class women are and want to be. They have learned to protect themselves against Gujar harassment.

(6) The women *suffer the brunt of the economic crisis* in its most acute and brutal form because it is the women who have to get food for the family. Unemployment, rising prices, and nonavailability of the barest necessities of life affect them directly. They have no easy escape into drinking, as men have, when their children are starving.

(7) The women *do not subordinate their own specific interests* and grievances to some abstract greater cause. Their mobilization, on the contrary, started from their own exploitation as women and as laborers, but they do not stop at their specific female oppression, as it is concretely interwoven with the oppression of their class. Class struggle and struggle for their liberation as women are one and the same process for peasant women. One cannot be separated from the other.

It is too early to draw far-reaching conclusions from the example of the peasant women in Maharashtra. It is quite possible that these women's mobilization will be neutralized by the co-optation of reactionary forces or even by orthodox Marxist organizations. Hypothetically, however, it can be said that no Indian revolution will be successful unless the three fundamental contradictions of Indian society—sex dominance, caste dominance and class dominance—are solved in one and the same process.

These three contradictions coincide in the case of the landless laborer and poor peasant women. The women are exploited *as women* by their husbands as well as by the landlords and rich peasants. As landless laborers are mostly *Harijans (Untouchables) and Adivasis*, these women are exploited and harassed by the upper castes (the same landlord-moneylender class). As *laborers* they are exploited with all other rural and industrial workers by the semi-feudal and capitalist class. This is the objective side of the revolutionary struggle of peasant women in India. They are therefore in a unique position, together with men, to fight a class struggle in all its dimensions and achieve total liberation. The example of the women of Shahada has shown that women's potential for revolution is more than just wishful thinking of a few Western radical feminists.

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* I am grateful to Kathleen Gough for her comments on this paper.

1. This paper was given at a seminar and study conference on "Leadership in South Asia," organized by the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, in January and March 1974.

2. About the discrepancy between progressive laws and ideology and conservative behavior concerning women see: M. K. Kapadia, "Changing Patterns of Hindu Marriage and the Family," *Sociological Bulletin*, 2 and 4 (1954-55). Many examples of this discrepancy are also to be found in Rama Metha, "The Western Educated Hindu Woman," Bombay, 1970.

3. For an analysis of the role conflicts of educated and working women in India see my dissertation: *Indische Frauen zwischen Patriarchat und Chancengleichheit* (Meisenheim: Anton Hain Verlag, 1973).

4. It is indicative of the patriarchal bias of present-day

sociology that this paradox has raised only a journalistic interest among social scientists. The most current explanation for the rise of Indira Gandhi to power is her family background and the fact that she is Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter.

5 The percentage of women MPs in India is larger than that of the U.S.A., Great Britain, Japan, West Germany, France, Yugoslavia and Norway taken together. The number of female ministers in India is higher than in other countries. After 1947 a number of women became mayors or district magistrates. For detailed figures see: Ch. A. Haté, "The Changing Status of Women in Post-Independence India," Bombay, 1969, pp. 229-30. In my interviews with women in leading positions, I found that most of them stated that they had no authority problems with junior male colleagues but that the men were jealous sometimes because a woman occupied a post which according to them should have been given to a "bread-winner." (Mies, pp. 246-47).

6. See: Ram Prakash, "Unprogressive Pattern of Women's Employment in India," in *Social Welfare*, June 1969.

7. According to the 1961 Census of India women were 9.6 percent in the secondary sector and 8.8 percent in the tertiary sector. Iravati Karve, "The Indian Women in 1975," in *Perspective, Supplement to the Indian Journal of Administration*, January-March 1966, p. 21. The decline of the number of women in these sectors is due to rationalization processes in traditional women's industries like the textile and jute industries and to the protective labor laws concerning women. This positive discrimination of women is often used by an employer as an excuse not to employ women. In a situation with mass unemployment these apparently progressive regulations are used to keep women away from the job market.

8. This problem has been raised mainly by scholars who worked in Third World countries, particularly in Latin America. Since Irving Louis Horowtiz' *Rise and Fall of the Project Camelot, Studies in the Relationship between Science and Practical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1967), a number of social scientists have sharply criticized the application of concepts and research methods of positivist sociology to Third World countries or marginal groups. For a criticism of this neocolonial scientific approach see Gerrit Huizer, "Is Our Research in Underdeveloped Countries Justified?—Some Ethical Considerations," in *Sociologus*, 23:2, 1973, pp. 165-77.

9. This was the case with socialist women in Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a discussion of this development see my article: "Class Struggle or Emancipation?" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3.50 (Dec. 15, 1973), p. 2221ff.

10. Among others see: Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectics of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970); Marge Piercy, "The Grand Coolie Dam," in *Leviathan*, October 1969, Cathy McAffe, Myrna Wood, "What is the Revolutionary Potential of Women's Liberation," in *Leviathan*, June 1969.

11. M. K. Gandhi, "Women and Social Injustice," Ahmedabad, 1958, p. 188, 194-95.

12. Ibid., p. 21.

13. Ibid., p. 75

14. Ibid., p. 12.

15. Gandhi was full of compassion for the Devadasis, the ritual prostitutes who belong to a special caste. He tried to free these women from what he considered to be the most abominable form of slavery. Yet he could not check his almost physical horror when he first came into direct contact with these "polluted women." Gandhi, op. cit., pp. 128-30.

16. Iravati Karve sharply criticized this moralistic attitude of the Indian Government when it reformed the Hindu Law Code: "If the Indian Government had not taken upon itself to pronounce about the moral superiority of monogamy or non-consanguinal marriages, it could have succeeded in making a simple law about marriage, divorce and inheritance, applicable to all communities. The law of today provides a political lever against communities like Muslims who allow four wives simultaneously to a man . . . The Western society was obviously in mind when monogamy was made compulsory but the divorce law and the experience of more enlightened Western nations and of the native communities who had this practice for centuries was obviously disregarded. This law, therefore, does not even serve justice." Iravati Karve, *Hindu Society—An Interpretation* (Poona, 1968), p. 163.

17. M. Mies, pp. 243-46.

18. Mies, pp. 209-11, 218-49. One might argue that almost any working class woman or peasant woman would give the same answer when asked about her priorities. I found, however, during my conversations with destitute women in a social welfare institution in Hyderabad, poor women from the city as well as from villages, that these women had different priorities. Most of them said that "job comes first, husband and marriage second." It must be added that a number of these women had either been deserted by their husbands or were widows or too poor to find a husband. They saw clearly that a husband was no longer a guarantee of economic security.

19. YWCA, *The Educated Woman in Indian Society Today* (Bombay: Tata McGraw Hill, 1971).

20. Ibid., p. 165.

21. Ibid., p. 169.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 170.

24. Ibid., p. 175.

25. Ibid., p. 166.

26. See: *Modern Review*, Vol. I, Jan.-June 1907, p. 433; quoted in: Manmohan Kaur, *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement, 1857-1947* (Delhi, 1968), p. 101.

27. *Modern Review*, p. 433, quoted in M. Kaur, pp. 101-02; and *Modern Review*, April 1912, Vol. II, p. 450, quoted in M. Kaur, p. 102.

28. Shri Prakasha, "Annie Besant as Woman and Leader," *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 198-99.

29. About Bhagat Singh and the revolutionary movement in the Punjar see: Bipan Chandra, "Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s," in B. R. Nanda, *Socialism in India* (Delhi, 1972), p. 167ff.

30. M. Kaur, op. cit., p. 216.

31. Ibid., p. 212.

32. There are only stray hints about women's participation in the Kisan Sabha movements in Bihar and Bengal in the relevant literature. See: A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay, 1966), p. 279. About women's participation in the Telengana armed struggle see: P. Sundarayya, "Telengana People's Armed Struggle, 1946-1951," in *Social Scientist* (March 8, 1973), p. 21.

33. See: "Political Prisoners," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 27, 1974.

34. To "gherao" (Hindi) means that a person is surrounded or beleaguered by a number of people who have a special demand. The person, usually a manager or government official, is not allowed to leave the place until the demands are met.

35. For a description and an analysis of this movement see: (1) "The Bhil Movement in Dhulia," *EPW*, Annual Number (February 1972), p. 205ff. (2) "Organising the Landless in Shahada," *EPW*, Vol. VIII, No. 10 (March 10, 1973), p. 501ff. (3) Ashok Manohar, "Shahadas Adivasis," *Times of India Weekly* (October 7, 1973). To understand the historical background of peasants' unrest in Maharashtra see the various contributions of Gail Omvedt in *EPW* to this topic: "Non-Brahmans and the Communists in Bombay," *EPW*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 16-17 (April 21, 1973); "Development of the Maharashtrian Class Structure, 1818-1931," *EPW*, Special Number (August 1973); "The Satyashodak Samaj and Peasant Agitation," *EPW*, Vol. VIII, No. 44 (Nov. 3, 1973).

36. The Lal Nishan Party (Red Flag Party) grew out of the Lal Nishan Group. In late 1965 the party was formed. It works together with urban unions as well as with the peasants.

37. For details see: Bhil Movement in Dhulia," *EPW* Annual Number, op. cit.

38. See: "Where Bandhs lead further," *EPW* (June 2, 1973).

39. Atrocities against Harijans and Adivasis have increased in recent years in rural India. Practically every week the newspapers report about such incidents in the villages where the Harijans and the Adivasis, mostly landless laborers, are the victims of landlord brutality. These incidents inevitably involve women who are usually beaten and raped. For an account of one of the most ghastly attacks of the ruling class on the rural proletariat see: "Gentlemen Killers of Kilvenmani," *EPW*, Vol. VIII, No. 21 (May 1973).

40. This is the refrain of one of the revolutionary songs of Shahada.

41. There is an exception to this statement. A large Adivasi movement in the Thana district in West Maharashtra is led by a single woman, Mrs Godavari Parulekhar, a doctor and member of the CPI (Marxist). Since 1934 she has worked among the Adivasis. In that year she and her husband went with a small band of committed communists as full-time workers to the Adivasi areas. She is considered by the Adivasis as their *Rani* (queen).

# Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya

by Betsey Cobb

Kamaladevi's life story illustrates the interaction between the nationalist movement and the women's movement in India. Born into a tradition-bound society just after the turn of the century, she was one of a growing number of Indian women who have insisted on forging their own lives out of their creativity, their consciences, and their participation in mass movements, despite intense social pressures. Often ostracized by society—she broke almost every social rule an Indian woman could—Kamaladevi never yielded to its pressure, but followed her conscience in both her public and private life.

Kamaladevi, now 72 years old, has been artist, freedom fighter, socialist, activist in the women's movement, founder of the Indian National Theater, and founder of the Indian Cooperative Society. She played a leading role in the *Swaraj* (self-rule) struggle and became a hero to both men and women through her bold exploits. When independence had been won, she turned her energies back to her initial love, the theater, but again answered the call of her country by accepting the task of organizing its scattered handicrafts into a national development program and an international industry. In this task she helped integrate the cooperative principle into the community development movement of the new nation. She organized village craft cooperatives, which not only encouraged artists and craftspeople, but also rescued many of India's dying handicrafts from extinction. Throughout the varied activities of her life she has shown a strong will and integrity, and stands out as an example of a woman refusing to be intimidated, either by family, social customs, or political authorities.

Kamaladevi was born into a wealthy family in Mangalore, on the west coast of South India, in 1903. Her father, who was a government official, died without leaving a will when his daughter was only seven. Her mother was a great influence as well as a source of conflict for the developing Kamala. On the one hand, the mother was an avid reader and greatly interested in politics, just then beginning to capture the popular interest in India. She was also unusually conscious of women's rights, a quality that rubbed off on her daughter. Combined with this was a fierce pride, so that when her stepson claimed the entire property of his father (her husband), leaving her only a small maintenance, the mother refused this pittance, using only some property left to her by her father to support Kamaladevi and herself. This strong will and pride impressed Kamaladevi. Yet on the other hand, the girl fought against her mother's aristocratic tendencies, and instead of playing only with children of the upper classes, as her mother wished, she insisted on playing with all the children she knew. As she later recounted, "Our household was organized on a very aristocratic basis . . . the more I was driven into this exclusiveness the more I disliked it and wanted to mix with the servants and the poorer people, play with their children and understand their life."[1] Thus from the beginning she showed a will of her own, which was to grow with the passing years.

During her childhood she had been uninterested in school, she found her grandmother much more fascinating. This woman was learned in Sanskrit and in Vedic lore; knowledge of such subjects was almost unheard of in women of that time. Kamaladevi learned much philosophy and mythology from early talks with her grandmother But after her father's death and the ensuing property settlement, Kamaladevi began to see how helpless she and her mother were because they were women. She realized that the only possible way out of the routine role for Hindu women lay in further education. Because she had come from a relatively well-to-do background, her family had been able to afford to send her to school, a luxury unavailable to most Indian families. Kamaladevi began to take advantage of her school opportunities, poured herself into her studies, and passed her senior exams at the age of sixteen.

As was the case for most Indian teenaged girls, her marriage was arranged by her mother and the parents of the prospective groom. But her husband died soon after the marriage ceremony, before she really had a chance to know him. Kamaladevi now began her practices which the orthodox were to frown upon. Widows in India, no matter how young, were expected to lead quietly miserable lives. Not only did Kamaladevi insist on continuing her studies, which was unusual in itself, but she did so as a widow. Further, she moved to Madras, a large city in another province, to do so, and there joined St Mary's College.

Kamaladevi was growing into a questioning adolescence just as her country was, she was infected with the spirit of the times and began to see threads of connection between her own life and the public events in India. Gandhi's assumption of the *Swaraj* leadership, the questions he raised, and the concerns he voiced provided a moral, intellectual, and political focus to her life. In a reminiscence about Gandhi she eloquently described her own search for identity against the background of her country's development:

*I had, as far back as my memory goes, been greatly puzzled and made unhappy by social differences and economic inequalities. Growing up in a fair amount of comfort, these queries and a deep burgeoning resentment towards inequalities and discriminations began to embitter my life and infect continuous strains in my family relationships Now here came a leader who seemed troubled by the same injustices and was out to identify himself with the lesser members of our society. What is more, he had a way to show to a newer life, a programme of action which was satisfying and made politics for those of my generation real. . . To me (problems of the country) had almost a personal intimacy as they seemed related to my own conflicts in my home and family over the social distances and the economic levels, not to mention the many prevailing social discriminations against women.*[2]

Wanting to physically *see* Gandhi, this man whom she admired so much and who so inspired the people of India, she traveled to Bombay, where he was to return after a trip to the Punjab. This was just after the Amritsar Massacre (a major incident in the Punjab, in which a British general ordered his troops to fire on a large crowd of unarmed Indians; 389 had been killed and over 1200 wounded). Gandhi was not permitted to enter the Punjab at this time (April, 1919), he was stopped at the border and escorted back to Bombay by the British. Huge crowds had gathered to see him. As the group drew near to where Kamaladevi was waiting, British mounted police suddenly started to ride into the crowd, brandishing their long lances from astride their horses, not caring whom they hit. Kamaladevi was shocked and shaken by this display of violence, and was deeply affected by it. The memory she took back from Bombay was a double image: a man whose eyes had been full of compassion as he approached the crowd, and a troop of uniformed men violently hitting into a crowd of unarmed men, women and children. She termed herself a "doubting Thomas" on the subject of total pacifism, and continued in her daily meditation sessions in her room greatly sobered.

While she was studying in Madras the young Kamaladevi met several people who were to play major roles in her life. Mrs. Margaret Cousins, a feminist from Ireland who had moved to India, was living in Madras, organizing women's groups and urging more education for Indian women. Kamaladevi became acquainted with her and her ideas during her college years. Mrs. Cousins provided an immediate and personal contact for Kamaladevi on the subject of women's rights and capabilities, issues which Gandhi was to make a major part of his campaign. The nonviolent philosophy of the movement was beginning to attract the female population of the country, and provided an impetus for more women to begin to think about feminist issues in general.

In Madras Kamaladevi also met an unusual Bengali family named Chattopadhyaya and became quite friendly with the three sisters. (One of them, who upon marriage was known as Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, also became an outstanding nationalist leader.[3]) The Chattopadhyaya family was in Madras to stage a drama one of the brothers had written; the play was full of witty songs and was performed to packed houses in the city every night. The playwright, Harindranath, who was also a poet, fell in love with Kamaladevi. Upon his first seeing her, he later wrote in his autobiography, "Her face was outstanding; I somehow guessed that this face was destined to play an important role in my life."[4]

When Kamaladevi announced her plans to marry Harindranath, orthodox society was outraged. First, she was a widow, and widows, especially those of the upper castes, were expected not to remarry. Second, the marriage was outside the "regulation" boundaries. Marriages in India were (and are) not only arranged, but the marriage partners were almost always drawn from prescribed sub-caste and regional communities, and always resided within the same province or state. Kamaladevi was not only arranging her own marriage, but her husband-to-be was from another province, spoke a different language, and was from another sub-caste.

How could a woman brought up in a culture which had such a strict behavior code for its women have the courage to break so many rules? True, Kamaladevi's family was somewhat unusual in the sense that her mother had an acute sense of women's rights, and her opinions seem to have been absorbed by young Kamaladevi. The seeds of change in the status of women had already been planted by the early reform movement in India, at least among the upper classes. The influence of Western education, along with the reform work of the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and similar groups had called attention to the unfair rules of society which were imposed upon women. The drive for acceptance of widow remarriage and for the right of women to inherit property had been started. Mrs. Annie Besant and her energetic work in the Home Rule League went further in showing the public what a dedicated, free woman could do in society. Kamaladevi was young and idealistic, came from an educated background, and had a strong will and conscience. Yet to pursue her desires when they conflicted so completely with the pressures of society took a strong will and unusual courage, and took its ultimate toll.

Kamaladevi and Harin seemed to cause an excessive uproar and attract much attention by the announcement of their intent to marry. Each came from a distinguished family, each was on the threshold of a brilliant career, and together they were a beautiful as well as outspoken young couple. They wanted to further their ideas and their ideals through marriage; looking back on their decision to marry, Kamaladevi later said, "I would not call it a marriage in the purely emotional sense. . . . It was much more our common interest in art. We had great dreams of doing things together and we thought it would be difficult to work together unless we were married."[5]

All attempts by family and friends to dissuade the couple were unsuccessful and they went through with the marriage. Kamaladevi thus set an early example by acting on the reforms she believed in; society, despite its reform rhetoric, was not ready for such action. Kamaladevi endured much gossip, hostility, and exclusion, and never quite regained her status in orthodox Indian society.

The year after the marriage Kamaladevi joined her husband in London, where she enrolled in Bedford College and the London School of Economics for further studies in sociology and economics. After about a year there, however, both she and Harin decided they could not ignore their homeland as it struggled to win independence. Concluding that a degree meant little in comparison with the fight their country was waging, the couple decided to halt their studies. On their way back to India they stopped in Berlin to visit with Harin's brother, Varindranath, already a political exile, though

it was only 1922. This visit in the turbulent times was an exciting one for Kamala, she met many of Varindranath's friends, including several feminists who were integrating their philosophies into their way of life. Among these was Agnes Smedley, who was later to become a champion of the growing struggle in China. Kamala had always been strong-willed, but this visit stimulated her thoughts to take a more political turn, and gave her an opportunity to meet various individuals who were centering their lives around their political beliefs.

Kamala and Harin returned to India in 1922. Kamala entered into political activity upon her return, but her energies did not exclusively belong to politics, by any means. She and Harin had been attracted to one another because of their love of the arts. The organized a dramatic troupe and proceeded to establish basic changes in Indian drama. Up to that time theater in India had been relatively shallow, appealing to mass instincts, attracting attention and audiences through gaudy costumes and scenery, rather than through intellectual interests or portrayal of everyday human life. Kamala and Harin staged a play he had written when he was 18. It portrayed realistic situations for believable characters and was received enthusiastically in the Bombay theaters where it was performed. Not only did the troupe change the traditional dramatic subject matter, but it also changed the concept of staging: instead of using the customary gaudy and expensive settings and costumes, it used only various shades of light against a dark curtain. Further, Harin, his wife, and their five-year-old son all acted in the play. Here again Kamaladevi was defying custom and social propriety; for the first time a "respectable" family woman came on stage in an intelligent play.

By the time Kamaladevi and Harindranath returned to India, the Congress Party and various individuals were waging a substantial struggle for change and liberation within India. Margaret Cousins, the feminist living in Madras, had organized a team to call on the English Secretary of State when he visited in India so that they could present the case for women's suffrage. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (now Kamala's sister-in-law) led the group of women. The British Parliament, probably assuming India to be conservative in the realm of social reforms and not wanting to spark any more antagonism, ruled the issue a provincial matter to be settled by each Provincial Legislative Council. Contrary to the British assumptions, both the Congress Party and the Muslim League endorsed the demand for women's suffrage and in 1920 Cochin and Travancore, two South Indian provinces, granted voting rights to women. Madras also granted equal political rights to women and in 1926 Kamaladevi became the first woman in India to run for a Legislative Council. She had been persuaded to run at the last minute, and friends warned her that she would probably lose, particularly because her orthodox opponent had many funds to spend on the election. She was running as an independent against a Congress candidate for the South Kerala constituency (then part of Madras). Despite her underdog status, Kamala threw herself into the campaign, a bundle of energy and enthusiasm. When the votes were counted she had lost by only some 200 votes. Even her opponent admitted that if she had had more campaign time she probably would have won. Although she lost the election, her entering the race and her spirit inspired enthusiasm and political consciousness in the women of the region.


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Throughout these years Kamaladevi was becoming increasingly involved in the women's movement. When she had been in college in Madras she had become acquainted with feminist ideas, largely through Margaret Cousins, who was active in both the independence and the women's movements. In Europe Kamala had met other feminists who had spoken freely of their ideas and goals, and had stimulated Kamala to think about women's position in India. At the first session of the All-India Women's Educational Conference, organized by Margaret Cousins in 1926, Kamala was unanimously elected its General Secretary, and she later became Organizing Secretary of the All-India Women's Conference.

The women's movement and the freedom struggle were at this time reinforcing one another. It was the independence movement which had given real impetus to the changing of women's position, a change which had been started by early reforms and which had been amplified by demands for more educational opportunities. As the struggle for independence gained momentum, women became less and less content sitting back and watching their husbands and brothers participate in a vital struggle which affected everyone. Attracted by the non-violent philosophy of the self-rule movement, women of all classes and positions started to speak out and demanded a place for themselves in the freedom movement. Gandhi, who by this time had become a leader and articulate spokesperson in the *Swaraj* movement, also urged the participation of women in the struggle. But even he had to yield to further demands by the women of India. At this time he was using several techniques of resisting the British. *Swadeshi* was a boycott of foreign products, which lessened the flow of money into Britain, stimulated self-sufficiency and new industries in India, and was a protest of individual conscience. *Satyagraha* was a term for "soul-force," a method of resistance through disciplined civil disobedience. Gandhi combined these techniques in his calls for a salt *satyagraha* to protest against the extra tax added to the price of salt, a vital commodity in the Indian diet. He declared he would march to the sea and make his own salt.

At first he said that women should not participate in the march, because he thought there would be too great a possibility of violence. But women all over India protested, declaring their participation should not be put into "watertight compartments"; that the *Swaraj* struggle was a unified struggle, and they wanted to take their places in "the front lines," beside the men. Their pressure and spirit brought results, and they were welcomed into all kinds of protest activities. Indeed, they were often asked to lead many of the actions.

After Gandhi's first march to the sea, salt *satyagrahas* were held all over India, for they were actions in which rich and poor, men and women, could participate. Soon, Gandhi asked Kamala to plan an action at the Bombay salt works. Her sister-in-law, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, had organized a similar raid a short time before. The eyewitness accounts of this had been frightening. Twenty-five hundred people, mostly men, had lined up in columns outside the Dharasana Salt Works. At the command of their British officers, four hundred native policemen, armed with steel-covered lathis, charged each column of twenty-five people as it began to advance toward the salt works. The volunteers had been well-disciplined in *satyagraha*, not one even raised an arm to ward off the blows. The lathis rained down hard; skulls and shoulders were fractured and there was the "sickening whack" of clubs hitting unprotected heads. As each column advanced and was beaten down, the police began to kick the fallen men in their stomachs and groins. By the end of the morning two men had died and over 320 were in the hospital.[6]

This account did not frighten Kamaladevi as she prepared to lead a march against the Bombay City Salt Works. She seemed to ache for action and was thrilled to be in charge of a march. Even in 1929, before Congress or any of its accepted leaders had done so, she had called for decisive action. At the Ahmadabad Youth Conference in 1929, she had urged her countrymen not to fall back, not to look for excuses to postpone a radical effort at *Swaraj,* but to move "*now,* at any cost." Her passion was contagious, though perhaps her vision was somewhat unrealistic, as her own account of the salt march shows: "I visualized a mass raid embracing a large part of the city's two million population. I was sure that no force, not even machine guns, could stop this raid."[7] The authorities heard of her plan and arrested her the night before the raid, but she exhorted the people to carry through, "Carry on the fight until British imperialism becomes only a dark shadow of the past; India's freedom will open the gate for worldwide freedom."[8] At the raid the next day, she was represented by her son of seven years, "who proudly carried the banner and engaged in the drama of his first battle."[9]

At her subsequent trial, Kamaladevi again showed her characteristic bravery and refusal to be intimidated. She not only defended her actions eloquently, but also invited the Magistrate to buy salt and to resign his job and join the *satyagraha* army. She then began to sell salt in the courtroom! For this she was given a sentence of six months' imprisonment and a fine, for breaking the Salt Act, three months' imprisonment and a lesser fine.

Like many other women and men active in *Swaraj,* Kamaladevi spent the next years in and out of jail. This was by no means an unimportant time for her, for she used the time to read and develop her political ideas. During the long *Swaraj* struggle in India, the behavior of the British towards Indians, both in jail and out, varied according to the time, the nature of the protest, and the individuals involved. Sometimes the British were courteous and respectful, particularly to some of the better-known leaders, knocking politely at their doors, handing them their arrest warrants with embarrassed apologies, and then waiting for them to eat breakfast before they took them off to jail. Once in jail, some Indians were still treated politely, put in quarters with their friends and relatives, given whatever books and newspapers they requested, and allowed to order their meals from outside. This was partly respect but mainly a very practical defensive measure on the part of the British, for they feared violent mass riots if anything happened to the Indian leaders while they were in British jails. Thus, during Gandhi's "fast unto death" in 1932 over the issue of communal voting blocs, the British were working as frantically as Indians to come up with a compromise satisfactory to Gandhi. They knew that if he died in prison the Indian people could take to the streets—and that nobody in India could come close to Gandhi's ability to restrain the people from violence.

Yet the British—and the Indian authorities under their command—had another side to them. As we have seen, the authorities often used brutal methods in breaking up protests which were explicitly nonviolent. The same was true in some

of the actions in which women participated. Reports came from all over the country of women being beaten in lathi charges by the police. The frail mother of Jawaharlal Nehru was knocked unconscious by one blow in a procession. In Madhya Pradesh three women were shot to death in connection with planned breaking of the laws. Thousands of women went to jail. Women did not ask for or desire special treatment; they knew the risks when they joined the movement, and indeed, they wanted to be treated equally.

Kamaladevi used her imprisonment as a time to read and think, mostly about politics and economics. The inequalities that had bothered her as a child still bothered her as an adult, but now she was old enough to recognize and understand political and economic systems that dealt with them. Over the course of the four years in and out of jail she became increasingly attracted to socialism, and when she emerged from prison in 1934, she was a convinced socialist, joining the Congress Socialist Party at its inception. The year after it was formed she presided as leader of the All-India Conference of the party. In her Presidential Address at Meerut she defended the concept of a "Socialist Congress" party:

> *In conclusion, I wish to impress upon you the necessity of rallying round the Congress and making it the chief organ of the anti-imperialist struggle. There are historical reasons why the Congress should be the real anti-imperialist platform. Ever since 1921, it is the only organisation which has been fighting Imperialism. No doubt, the leadership is either bourgeois or the people who have the bourgeois ideology. It represents, however, the objective strivings of the masses, that is, freedom from foreign domination, and the politically conscious people are in the Congress. The content of the Congress is not bourgeois. Therefore to create any petty-bourgeois anti-imperialist platform outside the Congress and to try to duplicate it would be wrong. It will become the sham replica of a Working Class Party and cannot embrace the entire petty-bourgeois anti-imperialists. All class-conscious working-class elements and the true anti-imperialists, rather than running away from the Congress, calling it bourgeois, should in fact enter it and clarify the issue of the masses, placing before them the correct programme so that the class differentiation that is taking place in the country may be reflected inside the Congress. Then alone shall we be able to capture the Congress movement and prevent the leadership from converting it into a bourgeois party, thus stealing from us the Congress heritage.*[10]

It was during this stormy period that Kamaladevi's domestic situation broke down. When her husband returned home from abroad in 1933, the couple found they could no longer live together comfortably, and they decided to separate. It must have been a painful decision for Kamala—not only did they have a son, but the price they had paid to marry had been great. As a divorced woman Kamala again was an "unwelcome category" in the realm of Indian orthodoxy. This was evident even as late as 1946, when certain Congress leaders objected to Nehru's inviting a divorcee to join the Congress Working Committee.

Perhaps because of her personal situation, Kamaladevi plunged even deeper into activity. She involved herself in constructive projects while out of jail, helping to organize the women's section of the Congress Volunteer Corps, a group which was training workers for the service of the country. She arranged camps for the training of women in literary education, history, geography, domestic hygiene, sewing, spinning, and organizing meetings. She was particularly interested in health workers, and for the next twenty years tried to mobilize more women into the health service of her country. Always interested in the cause and potential of womanhood, she participated in international women's conferences, in Geneva, Berlin, Prague, and Copenhagen. Then, from 1939 to early 1941, she traveled and lectured throughout the United States, countering British propaganda about World War II and the British stance in India. England proclaimed it was "fighting for freedom everywhere"—yet it was steadfastly denying it to India. Because Britain and the U.S. were allies, Indians felt it essential that the other side of the story be told to Americans, who themselves had once fought England for their independence.

Loving to travel, Kamaladevi proceeded on to China and Japan, also in the throes of civil and international war. While in Japan she again showed her courage by condemning the Japanese for their aggression against China. When she arrived in Hong Kong, another British colony, she was promptly arrested by the English authorities, only the intervention of the Chinese government secured her release.

Kamaladevi returned to India in 1942, just as the last and most intense mass phase of the independence movement was starting. She reimmersed herself in the activity, was again arrested and sent to jail. When she was released in 1945 she began to turn her energies in other directions. Independence was imminent, and the artist in her reasserted itself. Renewing her old interest, she founded the Indian National Theatre, and organized two ballets for that group, *Discovery of India,* based on Jawaharlal Nehru's book of the same name, and *By 1951.* She continued the writing she had been doing on social and economic issues in various countries, and published essays on America, as well as China and Japan, *America, The Land of Superlatives,* and *In War-Torn China and Japan.*

During this time Kamaladevi maintained her active service to the newly independent India. She served on Nehru's Congress Working Committee in 1946-47. She also embarked on a new project which has grown enormously and, until recently, still occupied her energies. With another woman she founded the Indian Cooperative Society near Delhi. Originally intended to provide refugees from the massacres and forced mass migrations of the 1947 period with a means of rehabilitating themselves, it offered shelter and a means of employment through a series of cooperatives. The Central Cottage Industries Emporium, an all-India marketplace for village crafts, eventually grew out of the operation. As a result of the experience she gained in these organizational endeavors, Kamaladevi was asked in 1952 to be Chairperson of the All-India Handicrafts Board.

The cooperative aspect of India's development was based upon the original ideals articulated by India's leaders during the pre-independence period. Envisioned as a "socialist democracy," a democratic nation whose economic development would be based on the ideal of shared wealth, the Indian government proclaimed that it would incorporate the principle of cooperatives into various segments of her development. The cooperative movement has had questionable success in India, mostly because it has not been accompanied by common ownership and a real redistribution of wealth. It is true,

however, that some of the various industries in which it was originally organized have shown tremendous growth. One of the faster-growing industries is handicrafts, the cooperative ideal was combined with the cottage and village industry movements to establish handicraft cooperatives throughout India, with the central government's All-India Handicrafts Board as the national administrator. Kamaladevi was the first chairperson of the Board. She helped to organize isolated village industries into small units of production, accessible to national and even international markets. Rather than a strict Gandhian approach, urging a return to handicrafts at the expense of modern industrial development, Kamaladevi urges adaptation—she has helped adapt many centuries-old crafts to modern markets, and in so doing she has helped provide a way for village people to support themselves and maintain their crafts as well as their self-respect.

When Kamaladevi took up her post, many of India's centuries-old crafts were dying out. With the British had come industrialization, the machine age, and a market economy. Before their administration, local crafts had depended largely on the patronage of rulers, powerful *zamindars* (landowners) and local temples. With that traditional support gone, many artists and craftspeople had abandoned their occupations. Through Kamaladevi's help in reorganizing crafts production, traditional handicrafts were reintegrated into the national economy and into the daily life of millions of people. India has a multitude of diverse handicrafts, from weaving saris of the most delicate silk to hand-tying woolen carpets. Many of the crafts are regional in orientation; one can often find a particular style only in one section of a state, sometimes only in a few villages. By developing a market and informing the craftspeople of its existence, Kamaladevi and the Handicrafts Board helped to save several art forms in India from extinction. The culmination of that organization of markets is now the Central Cottage Industries Emporium in Delhi, a large store selling craft goods from all parts of India.

As an integral part of handicrafts development, Kamaladevi maintains a faith in the capacities of grass-roots development as opposed to huge governmental projects imposed from the top:

> *It is the cottage and small industries that are a corrective to some of the existing regional imbalances, and not the big projects. . . . The real solution (to development of backward regions) lies in indigenous growth which must come from the local soil and its people, the local authorities' concern and the inhabitants' initiative and effort.*[11]

Despite her seventy-two years, Kamaladevi plays an active role in the development of her country. She is President of the National Theater Centre, which is a federation of theaters throughout India. Although she recently resigned her position as Chairman of the All-India Handicrafts Board to give control to younger people, she maintains her interest in the field and recently published two books on Indian handicrafts. She continues to express herself and to advocate her causes actively, writing articles and editorials in national newspapers on such subjects as family planning, feminine rights and the role of women in modern India. Artist, fighter, and organizer, she has focused her talents and energies in many different fields over the years. She is a woman of immense courage, who not only dared to defy the British authorities throughout the *Swaraj* struggle, but also, what is more difficult, dared to challenge the traditions and rules of her own society.



## Notes

1. G. S. Bhargava, *Leaders of the Left* (Bombay. published by Prabhakar Kunte on behalf of Meherally Book Club, 1951) p. 19.

2. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, "I Remember" in *1921 Movement Reminiscences* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971), pp. 57-58.

3. An account of Kamaladevi should also refer to her friend and sister-in-law, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. These two women were beautiful examples to their country of women daring to put into practice the rhetoric of the reform movement. Further, after their unconventional marriages both women took an active role in the nationalist and women's movements sweeping the country. Sarojini was the sister of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, and became Kamala's friend when both were young women in Madras. Like Kamala, Sarojini caused a furor by her marriage. A Bengali Brahmin, she fell in love with Dr. Govind Rajula Naidu, a Sudra doctor in the Hyderabad State Service. She endured the outrage of society to marry this lower-caste man. Sarojini was a poet, she published several volumes of verse and became known as the "nightingale of India" But like Kamaladevi, she postponed her artistic endeavors when her country was in need. She was a champion of women's rights and fought actively for reforms. She joined the Congress Party and became its first Indian woman president in 1925. A very close friend of Gandhi, Sarojini spent much time with him in prison, even persuading him there to take up table tennis and badminton! She had a wonderful sense of humor and a delicate grace; without offending Hindu sensibilities she could refer to India's revered leader as "Mickey Mouse" She did not become a socialist, like Kamaladevi, but put her energies into trying to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. She defended the Muslim cause even at the cost of offending some of India's leaders, and wrote a biography of Jinnah, the head of the Muslim League and founder of Pakistan. When independence was finally won, she turned her skills to other constructive activities, and became the first woman governor of an Indian state. She served as governor of the United Provinces, the largest state, until her death in 1949.

4. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, *Life and Myself* (Bombay. Nalanda Publications, 1948), p. 141.

5 Bhargava, p. 20.

6. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), p. 278, quoting from Webb Miller, *I Found No Peace, the Journal of a Foreign Correspondent* (New York: The Literary Guild, Inc., 1936), Chapter 16.

7. Manmohan Kaur, *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1968), p. 179

8. Kaur, p. 179.

9. Kaur, p. 179.

10. Kamaladevi, *At the Crossroads*, ed. Yusuf Meherally (Bombay: The National Information and Publications Ltd., 1947), p. 28.

11. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, "No Democracy Sans Tolerance," *Indian Express* (Madras) February 9, 1969, p. 6.


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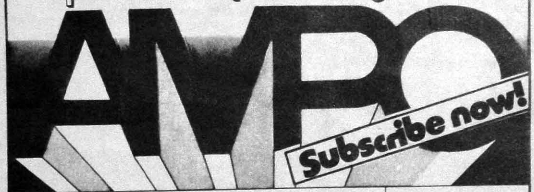


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